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'I Could've Died Twice': Jake On Overcoming Addiction, Staring Down Death In Fiji

Posted By: John Powell | October 10, 2025



Jake Latimer. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com





Even though they have played the game and shared the environment with lions, sharks and other such wildlife, animal attacks are very, very rare on Survivor. The score between human and the indigenous wildlife isn't even close with all the wild boars, pigs, fish, crabs, chickens that have been sacrificed so that the castaways can survive. There have been a few castaways stung by jellyfish and stingrays but nothing that serious. Even host-producer Jeff Probst has been stung by a jellyfish and a scorpion while filming the show. The jellyfish stung him in a very "sensitive spot" while he was in the water. Ouch!

The Survivor gods were definitely smiling down on Jake Latimer, the 36-year-old correctional officer from Alberta. Although he was bitten by the highly venomous Krait Snake, it was a dry bite with no venom. Jake was still pulled from the game due to the Kele Tribe's dire straits having very little food, water and no fire to speak of. His tribe has soldiered on without him but it appears that next week they will be absorbed into the two remaining tribes. Jake was profoundly effected by the harrowing experience and reveals what happened after he stabilized in that triage room back at Survivor's base camp.



Alex Moore and Jake Latimer. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

John Powell: Hey, Jake! How are you doing today? You're looking a lot better than we last saw you.

Jake Latimer: Yeah, man! I'm okay. I don't know, the last two days have been pretty crazy!

John Powell: I saw you watching the episode back and you had some friends there with you. What was it like going through that again? It seemed their support really meant the world to you.

Jake Latimer: It did and honestly that's the reason I went down to San Francisco. I live up in Canada. My wife was very nervous to watch it. I didn't even know she was going to I didn't want to have a watch party up here just because I know what happens on the show and it is going to be emotional. I cried a few times on the show...So, Joe Hunter was beside me, Kevin Leung and Anika Dhar and they knew what happened. They knew what happened and they were there to comfort me in that moment. It was so worth it. It was incredible!

John Powell: There's was a time where I faced my mortality and then also having a child. I'm a father too. Those things can really change your life perspective, put you on a different road. How did those things change you?

Jake Latimer: When you think that you're dying...All the information that I had on that boat ride over is that is a highly venomous snake. I didn't know it was 10 times more poisonous than the rattlesnake at the time. I got told after I was safe but it was a very highly venomous snake and we got to go, right?

That's when it all started. My brain started going off. Am I going to ever meet my child? Am I going to see my wife? Am I going to see all my loved ones back home? My dad? The last time my dad's going to watch Survivor and he's going to see his son die on it. There's all this emotion going on and it was scary, man. You know, I'm a big guy. I wear my heart on my sleeve. I don't like to admit when I'm scared but holy s--t! I was scared!



Jake Latimer. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

It's kind of made me really appreciate life a little bit more, getting home for the birth of my kid and just being a dad now. Even though it sucked, what happened? I think God works in mysterious ways. So, maybe it was meant to happen.

John Powell: You definitely had an angel on your shoulder. We saw what was happening to you. What we didn't see was what happened afterwards? Did you go to a medical facility?

Jake Latimer: After the cameras kind of shut off they took me to a Fijian hospital and then they got me to an Australian hospital. They medivaced me to an Australian Hospital in Brisbane just to err on the side of caution. It was almost like a second opinion just to make sure I'm fully clear. I thank God for that. I thank CBS the medical staff for allowing me to do that. I got to see my sister for an afternoon in Australia then I flew home and I was home 42 hours before my baby was born.

John Powell: Did you notice all the cameras and all the production around you when this was going on?

Jake Latimer: That's kind of a two part question too because you get used to the cameras out there, right? The first day or two you kind of feel bad, because everywhere you go they're following. But when it was at that point, I was just in fight or flight mode, right? I don't remember them screaming: 'Is he breathing? Is he breathing?'. I don't remember getting taken into the medical tent.

When my eyes were shut Jeff Probst was holding my hand and that was a comforting feeling. I've said this on another podcast but was like when you're a kid and you fall off your skateboard. You scrape your leg and you're crying and screaming. Mom or dad comes to pick you up and because it's a familiar face you instantly get the sense of relief, right?

I had all these people that I don't know, medical staff with using all these big words I don't know there's tubes everywhere and I was scared. And then when I saw Jeff's face, even though I didn't know Jeff personally until this season but it was kind of family member showed up and like...I'd love to, I'd love to thank him personally for that but I will next time I talk to him. It was crazy. The cameras? I didn't even realize they're in the room, man, I was just kind of seeing my life flash before my eyes. I guess you could say I was just thinking about my family, my dad and everyone back home.

John Powell: Do you ever question the decision to pull you?

Jake Latimer: Oh, don't get me wrong. If you watch it back you will see I got given the news that it was a dry bite and at that point I was ready to take off my oxygen mask and I'm ready to go back and compete. I even told my tribe: 'I'll be back in an hour, guys. Don't worry.' When Jeff says we have to take care of you I was heartbroken. I get emotional about it talking about it today but they did it for my safety, absolutely. Do I hold a grudge against Jeff or CBS? Absolutely not! I still got the chance to play this game but f—k do I want to be back in? Yeah!

John Powell: You got to your tribe's reaction to your departure. That must have been tough but at the same time that must have made you feel really good that they cared about you so much. People on the other tribe were feeling it as well. There was this moment where the game didn't matter anymore.

Jake Latimer: I actually watched the episode back. I got back from San Francisco yesterday and that moment really got me, I am not going to lie. I was crying to see the impact that I made not only on Alex, Sophi and Jeremiah, because they were crying, yeah, hugging each other. And it's just, but even Jason. I saw MC even holding her eyes. It just shows that at the end of the day we are playing a game but we all have families back home to get to and this is a very scary moment. It's really nice to see how much everyone cared about me. I love all my cast. They're all amazing people so it meant a lot.



Matt Williams, Jake Latimer, and Jawan Pitts. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

John Powell: Canadians have done really well on the show. Was there any kind of pressure? Did you feel that on your shoulders when you went out there?

Jake Latimer: I did, yeah. So especially being the first player from Alberta to ever be cast on the show, I had all that behind me. It kind of sounds stupid but even when I took off on the airplane to go to LA I was on a window seat and I could see my entire city. Then, we flew over Calgary. I see the city. I'm like: 'I'm playing for all these people. I'm the only one in this massive province to play.' I did feel the weight of it and that's why I was exploding at every challenge. I had all this motivation behind me and it's...I feel like I let everyone down here. Obviously, it was unprecedented. I didn't try to do anything to the snake. I got unfinished business out there and I hope that I can maybe one day make make Alberta proud again.

John Powell: I was going to ask you, after everything you went through would you go back and play again?

Jake Latimer: A hundred percent! If I got a phone call right now, my bag will be passed before the end of the phone call. That is my dream. It's not up to me. CBS knows I want back, right? I've made it very clear that this isn't it for me. So, it's up to them if I was big enough character if they like me on the show and they give me another shot. I will forever be in their grace. If they decide to part ways and not then I understand as well. I've got to experience it once which is a lot more than a lot of people have got. So, it's in their hands and I respect whatever decision they make.

John Powell: Is there anything that you would change about how you played, looking back and if you had that chance again?

Jake Latimer: You know what? No one's asked me that yet which is kind of funny. No, not really. I don't think so. I think I played a pretty good game. Like I said, I had Sophi as my true number one. I had Alex as my number one, Jeremiah, trusted me with his life because I was Canadian with him and very good to him. I was kind of dictating that that tribe to be honest. I was kind of running the show, which they don't really show you but I know I was so I was very happy with my gameplay. I was very happy with my ability at...No, I wouldn't say puzzles, Jesus Christ! Other than that, I'm very happy with my ability with the challenges. I was doing very good. I was having a lot of fun.

Am I going to have to make some changes? Yeah. I mean, I don't think the Shoe Bandit is a go because everyone will know about it,

John Powell: The jig is up. Shoe bandit, the jig is up!

Jake Latimer: I don't want the shoe bandit to retire yet though. He was having too much fun!

John Powell: Was there anything you wish fans go to see about your time on Survivor that we didn't?

Jake Latimer: Because we went to tribal council so much I did get a lot of air time so a lot of the stuff I did...there's nothing that I can really remember that I wish they would have shown. The only thing, and I've talked to a few people about this as well, is with the shoes. So I actually did hide my own shoes as well and I hit Alex's shoe and Sophi's shoe too but they only showed like Annie and Nicole, right? I was just having fun with it.

John Powell: What do you think happened to the Kele Tribe?

Jake Latimer: I don't know, man. Like I said, I'm not good at puzzles anyways. I told them from day one. Give me any sort of physical work and I won't let you down.

I mean, Nicole, put her hand up. I'm good at puzzles, she said. Alex, I'm good at puzzles, he said. We just couldn't figure it out. I don't really have an answer for you. I don't know why we couldn't figure it out because the other tribes could.

That last challenge where I ripped the ladder out of like 400 pounds of sand we had a five to six minute lead. I think it only looked like a minute or two on TV but we had a massive lead and we still bummed it up so that that was very, very frustrating to watch just because I worked my ass off in that challenge and I got us to where we had to get to quickly in order to win and we still lost. That was probably one of the hardest, hardest moments of the game to comprehend.

John Powell:

Now, one final question. Now you did say before you went out there in an interview that you know there was a time in your life where you weren't proud of who you were. What happened and what do you take from Survivor? What has that brought you because obviously it's had more of an impact on your life than probably a lot of other people who went out there and played just due to everything that happened to you.

Jake Latimer: No one's really asked me about that story. There was a time when I was younger and I was heavily involved in alcohol and I was making pretty bad decisions. I was hanging with the wrong crowd and that could have taken my life but I was able to turn my life around, get some help and go on this path of helping kids now. I

started working with kids and helping them and now I am with the Special Olympic program. I'm law enforcement. So I turned my life around but going on Survivor and just remembering that, thanking myself for turning my life around or else I wouldn't have had that chance.

It's tough to talk about, man, because I haven't really told a lot of people about it but now the whole world's going to know but that's okay. I'm proud of it. It's those parts of my life that shaped me who I am today. That's why I am the man I am today. It's just a chapter of my book.

John Powell: When we are younger we all make a bad decisions. We don't have the wisdom or experience. Now, if somebody was in the same situation you were in, Jake, what advice would you give them to put them on the road that you were able to put yourself on?

Jake Latimer: If we're going to talk about the alcohol thing, it's just not worth it. I know kids are kids but sometimes it takes over your life, right? It does take over your life but the grass is so much greener on the other side when you when you're able to kind of monitor how much you're drinking and bean adult about it. You know when you're in trouble. You know when you're drinking too much. Get the help. There is free help out there. Get the help turn your life around because life is so precious. Look, I almost lost my life in Fiji and I'm just so happy to be here, man! That's twice now that, you know, I could be dead. Nine lives. Is that what they say? Cats have nine lives.

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