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Jenna Claims Pregame Alliances Ruined Her Game

Posted By: John Powell | February 26, 2026



Jenna Lewis-Dougherty. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.



Entering an All-Star season of Survivor having last played 23 years old can be a daunting task on its own. The game has changed. You have gotten older and changed in various ways in that time. You are competing against younger players. That is hard enough but if some of the players on your tribe established an alliance well before filming ever began, you can be at a massive disadvantage.

This is how original Borneo castaway Jenna feels about her return to Survivor and maintains that's why she and others were at a distinct disadvantage before they ever stepped foot on the island to play.

John Powell: Jenna, it's good to be talking to you today. How are you?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: I'm good. I'm good. You know, I have had slightly better days but I'm okay now. (laughs)

John Powell: We saw your exit last night. Did you have any clue what was going to happen?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: So, I knew that my name was on the chopping block with Cirie and Ozzy, right? You see me standing at the water well with Ozzy and I'm kind of giving him this face like, "I don't believe a thing you're saying." But it was not me who put Cirie's name out first: It was Christian.



Jenna Lewis-Dougherty and Jeff Probst. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

If you saw last night, Christian telling Devens that he's Spock and Devens is Captain Kirk, and he says specifically, "I'm going to be all the brains, and he's going to go do all the work." Cut to Devens going to the water well and telling Cirie, "Jenna's saying your name."

Nope, nope. Christian and I, the first day, had talked. He said: "How's our tribe look?" and I said, "Who do you think is a threat?" And he goes, talks to Cirie and then comes back out. He's like, "That's who's the threat." And I was like, "Yeah, she's a threat and a liability." Somebody's always going to be "collateral damage" with Cirie. So I was like, "Yeah, Christian, I'm on board."

I felt, as soon as I landed though, there was something off, like I wasn't involved in a conversation. It's just because there were all these relationships outside of the game that I wasn't privy to. I had no pregame because I'd been out of this for 20 years but I think it will be a similar refrain (from others) that there were so many pregame alliances that it felt impossible. That's why I was playing so scrappy, because I felt like I was playing from the bottom.

So Christian says, "Cirie." I'm like, "Yeah, I'll definitely do it. That sounds great." So then I'm talking to Savannah and Joe, who I kind of felt like were in my boat. We three kind of felt like we weren't part of that little group. There was Christian, Emily, and Devens and you knew it was Ozzy and Cirie. So I kept talking to them and it shows that they're like this "Ozzy duo."

When do you want a duo in the game? A duo is good for nobody around the duo, right? You always try to separate them. Joe had just gotten screwed by Kam and Kyle. I'm sitting there telling him, "Duo—get rid of them." Like, you have to. And it would have weakened the other one if we had gotten Cirie, or even if we had gotten Ozzy, which was on the table because Emily and Devens all came up and were like, "Ozzy."

But you know, you saw Joe and Savannah were not the ones making that decision. Who was going? Christian was the one pushing my name, and Joe was like, "I don't know about that. Jenna may be playing hard, but God, we can't go to another tribal council." Joe and Savannah, they didn't want to vote for me and I think they knew that they had to separate the duo and that Cirie was a liability. It doesn't show it on the show but we stood there for 20 minutes. That's not even a joke, it was 20 minutes.

John Powell: You were the one who's portrayed as being aggressive in your gameplay. Was that a misconception?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: No, I would say I played aggressive but here's the thing: they tried to make it seem like I was aggressively going for Cirie, right? I was not going aggressively for Cirie. I was taking what Christian had told me Day One, and I was like, "Okay, I will go." And he never wavered. He always was like, "She's a threat and a liability." And you heard his Vince Lombardi speech when we got back, like, "We've got to do this better. We can't lose again."

So I was like, "Okay, since Day One, he's been saying Cirie." So I'm like, "Alright, we're on this." I was "rah-rah" for him over here for Cirie but I was scrappy because I knew that I wasn't in a strong alliance. I knew that they had their group and I was trying to get into that group. This duo, they have their thing and they're both on the chopping block so I will go with who is not.

I didn't realize Christian was like this little chess master doing it all. So I did think Ozzy and Cirie were definitely going to vote for me. There were three days of Christian setting all that up and his Vince Lombardi speech kind of nailed it for me too. It's like, "Yeah, of course."



Jenna Lewis-Dougherty and Rick Devens. Photo: Gail Schulman/CBS.

John Powell: How was your relationship with Cirie? We didn't see much of that, either personally or strategic.

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: You know, when we first got there, Cirie and I had great conversations. I was like, "She's a lovely woman." But, if you looked on paper before anyone went out there, all 24, what would you say is the biggest threat?

John Powell: As I wrote in my cast assessment, I said Cirie is one of the biggest threats simply because her social game is so strong and she's a social chameleon. She has the ability to be whatever you want her to be for you: mom, a confidant. And yeah, she's definitely a threat going into the game based on that alone.

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: I mean, everybody saw her as a huge threat. So, no, our conversations were great. We talked about how she met her husband and our kids. I didn't have anything against Cirie. I thought I was going with what Christian said. I will keep saying this, I will sit and look in Christian's eyes and he can depose me with an attorney, he has to tell me that did not happen because it absolutely happened exactly how I said it did.

He said her name, but now I see then he sent Devens to plant that. He was probably just making sure, I'm guessing here, but I'm thinking he's making sure that I wasn't aligning with Cirie and Ozzy because we were, like, "old school." So I think he was making sure there was a rift already so that Cirie was kind of targeting me. And I was like, "Okay, Cirie, yeah, I'll go with Cirie. I'll say what you want."

She's a huge liability because she spent 20 full minutes and they were, like, three-quarters of the way through the puzzle by the time she threw the ball to get it in there. She volunteered for that! She said, "I practiced! I practiced, I'm doing this." It was awful.

He comes back, gives the Lombardi speech, and he's already been telling me Cirie, and then they started saying Ozzy. And I was like, "Okay, they're definitely targeting those two. Okay, yeah."

John Powell: We've seen a lot in the show already of people talking about past Survivor history having an impact on their game. Did you feel any of that out there when you were playing?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: No, I think it was 20 years. I think actually what doomed me, and I think you'll hear this a lot in the coming weeks, it was the relationships that people made outside of the game. You're not supposed to pregame. I didn't; I haven't been in the Survivor universe in 20 years. I didn't have any of them on social, nothing. And we are told daily in an email, "You will be cut from Survivor if we catch you interacting." And I'm like, "Okay, I've been in this for 20 years. I will not." I did not.

And I felt it immediately. So, not necessarily like my game preceded me; it was literally like I landed and it was like, "Okay, I don't fit in here." Like, there's a big group that has been talking that I wasn't privy to. I likened it to somebody else, and I'll repeat it, but it was like I was worried about being late to the party, right? And I wasn't even invited! They were all like, "What's she doing here?"



Pictured: Jenna Lewis-Dougherty. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS ©2025 CBS Broadcasting, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

So that's why I was playing scrappy and was willing to do what Christian said and target whoever you wanted. Because I just felt that. I felt immediately like there was no connection to anyone but I could feel like other people had them. It was so weird.

And then, of course, you find out after, because I'm in Ponderosa, right?—you hear everybody come back and tell you who was pregaming, who had relationships, and I didn't know any of that. I literally talked to no one. So I was like, "Oh, of course." It all makes sense why I felt like nothing's working. This is really weird. They had so many alliances going into this that will play out.

John Powell: What are some of the other things that you wish fans would have seen to better explain your journey or your experience out there?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: They cut to that montage of clips of me playing hard and talking to everybody. It was like, by the way, whenever you had two or three people together, they were all talking about the same thing. You weren't getting together in a threesome and being like, at Day Two, and being like, "Look at those toenails, those are great." You're obviously going, "Alright, what are you thinking about this person?" Like, you're already there; you're there to play the game. That's absolute. I don't care if they're like, "We were friends."

What's the first thing Christian and Emily did? Did they say, "Oh hey, how's your parents?" Like, no. Because he considers her a very good friend outside of Survivor, which I found out in his pregame. I didn't know that, right? How nice, by the way, would it be to go play a social game with your very good friend? (Laughs) Like, I know nobody, right? She was put on a tribe with her very good friend, and then Devens is in that little group, and Christian and Ozzy played together twice.

So I was the only OG that was put with absolutely nobody on my tribe. Stephanie and Colby, you heard them on the show, Stephanie [said], "I could trust him implicitly, I'm so glad he's such a comfort to me." And I was like, "Hey, it would have been nice if I'd have been with Colby, he's the only person I know out here." I felt a little bit like I was up as a sacrifice on the altar of Cirie because I wasn't put out there with anybody that I knew.

John Powell: Watching it all back again, you get to see things that you weren't privy to. What surprised you the most about what you've seen played back?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: Christian. I think finding out that Emily and Christian were like, I mean, everyone's like immediate, like Christian/Devens is immediate, and Emily/Christian is immediate. Oh yeah, that was all done before the show ever started. I didn't know that.

But it was really shocking to find out how much Christian was setting me up against Cirie by planting Devens at the water and saying, "Jenna's saying Cirie," when it was him. I think that's interesting to me. And the whole Spock/Doctor powers/Spock/Captain Kirk thing. He was like, "I'm going to be the brains, I'm going to send Devens to go do all the labour and dirty work." And that's exactly what he did. Like, that shocked me a bit.

John Powell: You said previously that you learned a lot about yourself and Survivor in the previous times you were out there. What did you learn this time, if anything, again, because you played twice before?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: Yeah, I did learn. First of all, my biggest fear going out there was being voted off first. So, hallelujah! But I would say I also learned...I followed the shiny keys. You know, they were like, "Oh yeah, Cirie." And I felt desperate, to be fair. I felt desperate from the get-go. That's why they're like, "She played fast and

round.” I felt on the bottom from the second I got there.

And like you’re hearing me now, these guys were all in alliances. So I was right, I did feel desperate but I took the first key and I didn’t really kind of dig in deeper, like with Christian. I took him at face value because it was since Day One, and I really was like, “Okay, Christian, I’ll just go with him.” I didn’t feel like I was in his alliance but I felt like there might be an inroad and since he had pitted Cirie, I felt like that wasn’t an option with her.

Plus, I do feel like you will lose every challenge with Cirie. I think you will. And if you lose challenges, anyone can become collateral damage. Even if you think you’re in the best alliance ever, anyone can become collateral damage. So the last thing you want to do is go to tribal council. And if you have Cirie in these first pre-merge, very physical [challenges], you will lose. And Joe saw that. Savannah saw that.

John Powell: You’ve played the game three times. What do you think about these New School players? What are the positives they bring to the game, and what are some of the weaknesses?

Jenna Lewis-Dougherty: You know, I mean, it says something that the Old School player came in and they’re like, “She came on too fast.” Like, honestly, I’d rather play that way than roll over and die but that’s kind of what it felt like these New School players were doing. Savannah just won; she won 10 days before I was out there. So if Savannah can’t get her s–t together enough to put together a little bit of an alliance, then there’s no hope.

Like, I was playing hard and fast because there were no inroads. But Joe and Savannah weren’t either. They were both sitting on the log going, “Uh, Ozzy... Devens told me Siri...” and they were both going, “I don’t want to vote for Jenna.” It shows you right there that Christian’s the one who brought my name. Christian and Devens come to

them, and then they're like, "I don't want to vote Jenna." They're not in that decision process; like, they're not in that alliance. They were floating around.

Savannah feels, I think, like she's on the bottom, her and I chatted about not being comfortable there and trying to see where we might fit but her and I also never were like, "Hey, let's do something, let's chat about our plan or have a plan." So they play fast, they play quicker? No. Not really.

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