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“I Should Have Been DMing Players”: Savannah Louie Reflects On Survivor 50 Pregaming

Posted By: John Powell | March 5, 2026



Savannah Louie. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.



No matter what you may think of her as a player or a person, it takes a lot of guts and fortitude for anyone to play another game of Survivor a few short weeks after just wrapping up a season and as the winner of that previous season.

With very little time to sort out her home life or recover from the physical and psychological toll of season 49, Savannah Louie returned to the island as an X factor, an unknown quantity to everyone but Rizo as their season hadn't aired yet during the filming of Survivor 50.

Savannah told us what it meant to finally have her torch snuffed and how pregaming was an unavoidable part of this season.

John Powell: Savannah, thanks for taking the time to talk to us today. How are you?

Savannah Louie: I'm good. All things considered, kind of trying to process everything but overall just so good!

John Powell: I know from talking to previous survivors, and this is mentioned a lot, that when they watch the show back all of a sudden they're transported back to the island. All those emotions come back. Was it that way for you, watching your exit on the show?



Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

Savannah Louie: Oh, my gosh! Yes! I mean, absolutely! I was so lucky because I was with my family and my friends and people who have just been part of this crazy journey. I just broke down in tears. It was so amazing having just all that love in that room to watch that emotional moment. I was transported back to that moment, but, you know, without a lot of the hunger and everything else. (laughs)

John Powell: When Jeff was snuffing your torch for the very first time, I might add, you were really, really emotional. What was that? Was it a mix of things? Was it being sad that your journey was ending but you were happy that you were part of the experience too?

Savannah Louie: You nailed it! I mean, when he snuffed my torch, it was almost like there was this wall that I put up to kind of hide some of those emotions or suppress some of those emotions. When that torch was snuffed, I'm like, oh, I can take a breath and that wall fell down. You're seeing a lot of gratitude in that moment. You're seeing a little bit of relief because I was so exhausted and tired and stressed. You're seeing a lot of sadness, obviously, because I did not want to go home. I didn't want that to be over but you're seeing a little bit of everything. I think the biggest thing was just being overwhelmed by all of that emotion and different emotions all at once.

John Powell: When I've spoken to previous winners about returning to the show, they've discussed with me their mindset and how they're like, okay, if I go back, will I affect my legacy? How will this impact me as a player? We talked about the process of bringing you back, was there anything in your mind saying I shouldn't go back?

Savannah Louie: There was hesitation but not because of legacy. I didn't necessarily go back onto 50 to fill an ego void or anything like that. That wasn't really top of mind. I was hesitant, though, because of people back at home. I was really worried that you leave again for another over a month. That's really hard on certain people who are taking care of your responsibilities and everything like that. So, that was probably the only thing that would have stopped me from returning for 50.



Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

John Powell: One thing you have to take from this above anything else is you beat that challenge beast Colby. How does that feel?

Savannah Louie: Oh, my gosh! It's crazy! I mean, especially considering I can remember being eight-years-old and watching Colby play. I was a Survivor fan from day one, before I was ever even close to being a player. So, a big part of going on that journey, it might not have been best for my game, but as far as my Survivor experience goes I'm so glad I went on that journey and I got to meet and play with someone who has had such an impact on my love for the show.

John Powell: I've also spoken to players who have been on seasons with returning players, well-known Survivor icons, and some of them have admitted, being "starstruck". Did that feel that way with you?

Savannah Louie: It's like the more you talk to someone, the more you realize, oh, just a normal person, right? I definitely had stars in my eyes, not just with Colby, playing with Colby and that journey but even just getting to that first beach and meeting the OGs, like Jenna and Cirie and Ozzy. They are iconic players. I was so intimidated at first, but then, you have conversations, you realize, oh, these are just normal people. They just happen to be really good at a game that I've loved for so long and they made the experience just so wonderful.

John Powell: It seemed to me that you're more akin to an old-school player, the way you play the game. Did you get along with the old-school people right away?

Savannah Louie: Colby and I got along really well. I think if we started on the same tribe we probably would have worked together. Jenna and I, from the get-go, we were on the same page. I think there's also something about her being just such a strong, confident woman who can also be an aggressive gamer. I saw that in myself, which is why I liked her.

With Ozzy and Cirie, I adore them. They are just two fantastic players but I didn't necessarily have that same connection with either of them as I did maybe with Colby and Jenna. I felt like I would have loved to but I didn't necessarily feel like they wanted to work with me right away. I felt like maybe I was an option for them but I was maybe more of a concern or an obstacle, especially with them not knowing my gameplay. So, while we may have aligned, maybe if they had seen how Season 49 worked out and seen my gameplay, unfortunately, it just wasn't in the cards out there.

John Powell: You did eventually reveal to everyone that you'd won that season, you were a former winner. What went into that? Did they kind of suspect that?

Savannah Louie: Initially my plan was, I'm not going to tell any of these people I'm a winner. I don't want to seem like a huge threat. I'm already an unknown winner but as I was leaving Atlanta to go to LA and then Fiji, one of my friends from Season 49 reached out to me, and she's like: Savannah, I just got a call from someone who was on Season 47. They know our entire boot order and who won. If they know you won, that means people on the island are going to know that you won!



Savannah Louie and Colby Donaldson. Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

In that scene where you see me say: "Hey, how do you think I did?". A big part of the reason why I'm asking that is to see does anyone offer up any information? Does anyone say: Oh yeah, I actually heard you won or I know you won or if anyone locked eyes in that moment to maybe communicate: She's going to tell us she won. So, there was

a little bit of maybe strategy behind that to just kind of see people's reactions but I knew I had to come clean just because everybody in my mind already knew.

John Powell: Another big obstacle in your game seemed to be the journey. What impact did that have on your game and what was your thinking in dealing with that when you came back to the tribe?

Savannah Louie: I mean, it definitely didn't hurt or help my cause at all. I will say after Jenna went home I was really worried that I was going to be next. So, when the opportunity came to go on a journey I kind of looked at it as, hey, if I'm going home, if we're at tribal council in two days, I either want to have maybe some sort of advantage but more importantly, if I'm voted out, I need to leave here feeling like I had a full Survivor experience.

So, my mindset going into this is like, you know, I've never been on a journey. I wanted to go on one in 49 but I was always a little bit nervous to actually go out on one. You also keep in mind you're playing 50 with people who I looked up to, right? Who else might I meet on this journey? It was a cool experience for me. So, even though it was not very good for my game I don't think it was the ultimate thing that sunk my ship. I think I was already a big threat and I probably would have gone home whether I was on the journey and got an advantage or I just sat my butt at camp. If I was going to go home at least I have another cool experience to talk about.

John Powell: Now, when I spoke to Jenna, obviously there's two ways to look at this. Some people look at it like, well, it's just using your resources. It's perfectly fine. Other people, it is not a good thing for them. She mentioned that when she got to the island and she got to know people she felt that there were some alliances that were made beforehand. That there were already people locked in before there was any time to discuss alliances. Did you have any feeling of that out there? Was your Spider Sense was going off at any time?



Photo: Robert Voets/CBS.

Savannah Louie: I think pregaming with a returning season, it's going to happen, right? You have people who are vying for a million dollars. I don't blame them. My biggest thing was in my break between seasons I was spending time with my loved ones. I was soaking all of that in.

I should have been on my phone DMing all these Survivor players! That's my biggest mistake! Pregaming doesn't always look like, hey, we're going to hop on a phone call and say we're going to vote out so-and-so on day three, and then on day five we're going to do this and have this plan. It can look like, hey, I know someone who's going to be on this season. Just so you know, you can trust this person. I'm giving them my stamp of approval. That little ounce of trust goes such a long way in a game where trust is everything.

So, it's definitely hard and I think it also is telling that two of the people who went home very early, me and Jenna, we didn't pregame at all. I'll let people kind of make their conclusions from that.

John Powell: You and Rizo were from Season 49. He knows your story. You know his. Was there any kind of discussion on how to handle that going in?

Savannah Louie: You know, crazy enough, we didn't really talk about how we were going to portray our relationship. We never really got on a call and said, hey, I'm going to say this.

My plan going into it was to basically say, like, I liked Rizo. We started off on the same tribe. We then kind of had a little bit of a falling out. I also kind of tried to put distance in between us. I mean, I love Rizo. I was kind of trying to shade him a little bit in some senses because I didn't want people to think we were super close. So, I talked a little bit about how he's young and just sometimes super excited to be there and it can be a lot.

In reality, those are things I love about Rizo. I was trying to be a little shady just in case we ever did get on the same beach. Maybe people wouldn't think or know that we were as close as we really were because ultimately I wanted to work with Rizo and while I was also shading him, I was also trying to talk him up a little bit too. I think I said at times on the island he was really loyal to his people. I just didn't say who his people were.

John Powell: Is there anything about this journey where there was a moment with somebody, whether it was strategic, was there anything that you recall that you wish people would have seen about your journey this time around?

Savannah Louie: I think the biggest thing for me is I've gotten some flack over my social game as far as 49 goes and I think that a lot of that flack is unwarranted.

For Season 50, even though I was voted out, I genuinely felt like I had a personal connection with everybody out there. I was in such a weird spot because my season hadn't aired yet. So much of Survivor, it happens on the island, but a bigger part is what happens off. My tribe was just so supportive and offering advice and just kind and empathetic about some of the challenges I was already facing at that time.

I wish that maybe those connections had been shown. Overall, I loved my edit for 50. I feel like it encapsulated overall how I wanted to play the game and certain things that I clocked. Overall, my exit, I feel like I had my final words, which was so special to me. So overall, I cannot complain.

John Powell: You mentioned the fan response, and I look back at it, and you played an old-school, very aggressive game. Maybe if a male would have been playing that game in that way they would have been seen or portrayed in a different way. What is your answer to some of that criticism?

Savannah Louie: I think the thing that I don't like is when people start coming for my character when they start discussing my game. So, for the people who are calling me a "mean girl" or saying I need to be humbled or that I'm too cocky, I don't think those are things that would be said about a man.

I also think that sometimes the way that people view us is more of a reflection on how they view themselves. If I'm making someone feel uncomfortable what does that say about them and how they view women? You know, just something to think about.

Maybe it's warranted. Maybe it's not but it was frustrating at times. If I can be out there and if I can play not a mean game but an aggressive game and a bold game and a game that's not soft, I'm going to own it. I hope that I can help pave the way for other women who want to play the game like I did, just like there have been women who have played this game and who have gotten the same exact labels as me, how they paved the way for me to empower me to play the game that I did.

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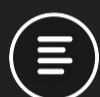
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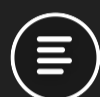
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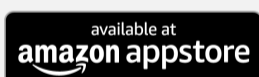


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