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Emily Owns Her Chaos And "Hurting" Her Allies

Posted By: John Powell | May 7, 2026



Pictured: Emily Flippen, from the CBS Original Series SURVIVOR, Season 50, scheduled to air on the CBS Television Network. -- Photo: Robert Voets/CBS ©2025 CBS Broadcasting, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

By John Powell – GlobalTV.com



She may be one of the most chaotic players Survivor has ever seen but sometimes there is a definitely method to her madness. Emily Flippen wasn't sure about returning to Survivor but she braved the Fijian jungle, the twists, the cutthroat players and Jeff Probst's horrible rapping to stir things up again.

John Powell: Emily, it's wonderful to be talking to you. How are you feeling?

Emily Flippen: I'm feeling really good. How about yourself?

John Powell: Fine, thank you. The last time we spoke, you were really happy and grateful for your Survivor experience, but at the same time, you said, "Look, I'm moving on. I've gotta get on with my life," and whatnot. Here you are back again. We know it's Survivor 50. More than just it being the big milestone season, what brought you back? Did it feel good to be on the island again?

Emily Flippen: I mean, after watching me play on 50, I think now you realize why I said I was done. (laughs) Maybe I should have stayed done! (laughs) But no, I am so thankful to have been asked back but also thankful that I gave it a shot, even though it was just such a messy, chaotic, absolute disaster for me. But yeah, I guess you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take. I won't have to spend the rest of my life wondering how it would have gone. I know now: It would have gone terribly. (laughs)

John Powell: Going into Tribal Council, you spun a great scheme to go after Cirie. How did you feel going into that Tribal? Did you think you had those votes locked in?

Emily Flippen: I remember feeling like maybe I sold Jonathan and Tiffany on the idea. Right? But, Cirie basically invented the split vote. I was like, "Cirie is too smart to fall for this." So I called it kind of a "Hail Mary" shot. I didn't think it was likely to work.

At some point, somebody asked me, "Don't you think the Shot in the Dark has better odds?" I was like, "It probably does, but that doesn't win you the game, right?" That would just buy me another week while I'm still in the same bad position. So, I'd rather take a shot, if Rick is willing to take this crazy shot with me, that actually changes the positioning I have in the game if it works. But obviously, I didn't know about the extra vote so it was never going to work.

John Powell: Did it surprise you that Rick used the idol on himself?

Emily Flippen: No, no, that was always the plan. I would never want Rick to play the idol for me, honestly. It's his idol. He literally went on a ledge to get it and I was working closely with him. I wanted to continue to work with him. So I just thought to myself, "What is the best way?" There was this blind hatred toward Rick from some people on

the cast, not "hatred" that's the wrong word, but they really wanted him out. They were happy to lose me but they actually wanted him gone because they viewed him as a threat. So I was like, "How can I use that to my advantage?"

That's kind of how I concocted this. Because everybody was giving Rick a bit of flack for his showmanship, I remember thinking, "Okay, they actually think that he is such a showman, maybe we can make a play off of that." They want to vote him off. They don't want him to play his idol. He's showboating. They think we're close. How could I take all these different pieces and make them into a little plan? I had a lot of fun coming up with it. The plan obviously failed but I'm so thankful I was given the opportunity to at least try to save myself. I actually think that was easier to do on a smaller tribe than it would have been if we all went to Tribal Council together.

John Powell: Was Rick a good shield for you? Because obviously, in this kind of game where trust is important, he is very chaotic. Do you think that played into it at all? What was it like working with him?

Emily Flippen: I feel like I thrive in the chaos. I did feel like the idol shenanigans maybe drew attention to our little alliance, but honestly, after Christian's vote-off, the alliance was just falling apart regardless. I think Cirie was always going to have to make a call about who she wanted to work with and I think she had made the decision in her head earlier on: "I'm going to have to cut this alliance at some point." So, I think it was probably inevitably going to happen but playing with Rick was fun and that made all the difference for my desire to be there and stay in the game. He was surely chaotic but not any more chaotic than I was! (laugh)

John Powell: Well, speaking of that, we saw at the beginning of the season, especially with Christian, he was having his frustrations with you. What was happening at the beginning of the game? Were you just trying to find your footing? Because again, Christian was like, "Oh, what am I going to do here?" and yet he stuck with you.

Emily Flippen: Christian is an absolute saint for doing that! I owe the fact that I made it as deep into the game as I did completely and entirely to him. At that tribe swap, when Mike floated my name, Christian had a choice to make and he decided that he thought I would be a more loyal ally. For better or worse, I was loyal to Christian until the very end. I had no intention of voting him off.

I feel bad that what happened, happened. It was not strategy. It was genuine "verbal diarrhea". I think I am a bit of a verbal processor and I have to talk through things to really understand what's going on. After I was blindsided about Aubry's idol, the first people I talked to just happened to not be him. Obviously, I wish I had processed that differently and I'm thankful that he gave me the opportunity to apologize and move forward together.

John Powell: What I found most interesting is that people just reveal things to you. They are constantly giving you information. Why do you think that is? We saw it over and over again, people telling you sensitive things.

Emily Flippen: I think people were sharing sensitive things with a lot of the people they were working with. I think the reason why you saw it with me was because, ultimately, I betrayed a lot of that confidence by sharing it with other people. So it became relevant to show in the storyline. You know, like, "Hey, Dee told Emily about Rizzo's idol, and Emily told that to Rizzo", which I, by the way, didn't realize I had done until the episode aired! It was absolutely miserable! I think there was a lot of sharing of information happening. I don't think people were "special" in sharing their information with me but I think it was shown because I ended up making such a mess of the information that I did know.

John Powell: What I'm hearing, and this may give you some positivity back, is that as I've been interviewing everybody through the season. A lot of people are talking about the "female edit," of course but what they centred on with you, Emily, is that you're not getting the credit you deserve for the game you're playing and the moves you're making. How does it feel to hear that back from people?

Emily Flippen: It's really kind to hear that. I think everybody has their own perspectives on the game they played and I can't speak for anybody else. I can't say I was playing some strategic mastermind game but the benefit of my "strategy," for lack of a better word, was that I think it came across as genuine and transparent. For better or worse, I was sharing information like a wild person but it came across as real. Maybe people thought they could work with that and that benefited me.

But it's devastating when the mistakes you make hurt your allies. I continuously, over the course of Season 50, without even realizing I was doing it, was hurting my allies' games. It's really hard to get deep into the game without close allies. Maybe I was okay in my positioning but I kept hurting the people around me, and as a result, I ended up here talking to you in an exit press session. (laughs)

John Powell: One of the things you talked about when we first spoke a few years ago was the public reaction to your game. You have to respect anyone willing to put themselves out there, but of course, you're going to get the "slings and arrows." How is it this time around for you? Are you dealing with that better?

Emily Flippen: You either die a hero, or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain! (laughs) I knew coming into Season 50 that I was very unlikely to get the same hero edit that I got in 45. It was virtually a given that the public perception of me would be worse. It was actually part of the reason why I didn't really want to come back to Survivor. I had a lot more to lose in that regard but what a stupid reason to prevent yourself from having a life experience and having fun!

I do think I am learning to handle it better. It's not easy. I take criticism to heart a lot which I don't think is a terrible thing because we all need to grow and improve as people but I do think some people's personalities are a bit better positioned to be in the public eye than my own. I know I said this after 45, but I wouldn't play again. It is hard to have the world's opinions about you, and it's not that they're inaccurate, it's actually maybe more that they are accurate and it's hard to face that reality. It's a lot easier to sit behind my computer screen at home. (laughs)

John Powell: Is there anything out there that you wish people would have seen?

Emily Flippen: What do you mean? You saw way too much of my journey! (laughs)

Honestly, it was just like 45. It's so funny because I told my friends and family coming out here, "It's not going to be like 45. It's not going to be 'The Emily Show.' You're not going to see me that much, don't worry about it." Then as the episodes were going, I'm like, "Oh, I didn't realize that was such a disaster." Now you're seeing a lot more of me than I was expecting! (laughs)

So, there was unfortunately a lot of my "game", I use the term loosely, that was shown. I guess the only thing that wasn't shown was that I did have these one-off relationships with people. I felt very secure in my "Seal of Four" alliance prior to Christian's vote-off. I thought we were really tight and I had these individual relationships with other people in the game that I was nurturing and growing. But obviously, they didn't end up making a difference in what happened to me, so I understand why they weren't shown.

Emily Flippen Survivor 50 Exit Interview

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John Powell: Obviously, you can't say who you voted for because those are spoilers, but—

Emily Flippen: I voted for someone! (laughs)

John Powell: Amazingly enough! (laughs) But when you were thinking about bestowing that vote on someone, what were some of the values or aspects you were debating?

Emily Flippen: This is so difficult. As a jury member, I really wanted to vote for the best player but the problem with voting for the "best player" is that it's incredibly subjective. It also ignores the fact that people, including myself, have their own biases and perspectives. I remember I had a conversation with production as I was racking my brain, like, "I don't know how to vote." It's such an important decision with \$2 million sitting there.

Somebody said to me, "Hey, Emily, you don't know what you don't know. You can only make the decision with the information you had at the time." And unfortunately, in my game, I was pretty siloed in my own world so I didn't always have the best perspective about all the strategy happening with other people behind the scenes. It's a hard decision to make but I did know that I wanted to vote for who I perceived to play the best game.

Emphasis on "perceived" because I only knew what I knew. I have my own biases and thoughts and I would be ignorant to say that they can't impact the way somebody votes on the jury.

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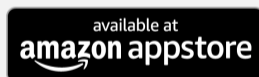


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