

Survivor

Episodes & Clips

News

Cast

About

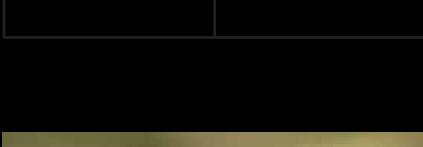
Fantasy Pool

Quiz

< BACK

Survivor's Casupanan Playing For Herself And Canada

Posted By: John Powell | September 22, 2021



By John Powell – GlobalTV.com

A life-long *Survivor* fan, it is a dream come true for Canadian Erika Casupanan to play the game and live the adventure which debuts tonight on Global TV.

"It is such an honor to represent Canada! It has been my dream to be on *Survivor* for almost my entire life and I thought that I wouldn't have the chance to have the dream come true so when Canadians were announced to be allowed to play the game, I knew that without hesitation I needed to throw my hat in the ring. It's just been so amazing to be able to go out and play. I've really been overwhelmed by all the kinds of messages that I got from Canadians saying that they're excited to see someone living in Canada playing the game. They're excited because it makes them feel like they could play the game to one day and I think they can," said an excited Casupanan.

Originally from Niagara Falls and now living in Toronto, Ontario, the 32-year-old communications manager felt some pressure knowing her identity might play a role on the show in various ways.

"I think that any time you're representing any group there's a bit of pressure because you don't want to let anybody down. At the same time, I knew the best way I could represent any group was just to be myself. I knew that if I just give it my all out there and some people might like me but in the end, at least, they'll see that I was truly going for it," she explained.

Being a Canadian, Casupanan had one clear advantage over some of the other players.

"I think that being from Canada did give me a leg up. The cold Fijian nights weren't that bad or a terrible experience," she laughed.



Casupanan took her *Survivor* journey very seriously. She took swimming lessons, enrolled at multiple gyms, listened to podcasts on game theory, watched every past season and worked extensively on her puzzle skills. But that was back in 2020. The pandemic threw a wrench in both the producers' plans and Casupanan's too.

"I found out (about the delay) just a few days before we were going to leave for filming so felt like I was this balloon that was full and then all of a sudden quickly deflated. When it came time to film this year I didn't put as much pressure on myself. I'm was just going to focus on the things that I know I'm good at and just have faith that I have enough to get on the show. I know I have more than enough that will help me to be successful on the show," she said.

One of the skills that she hopes will come into play is her time boxing. Casupanan has had two amateur bouts and was trained by Canadian boxer Mandy Bujold. Bujold has won gold medals in the women's flyweight category at the 2011 and 2015 Pan American Games, won a bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games and competed at the 2016 Summer Olympics and the delayed 2020 Summer Olympics representing Canada.

"I was one of those kids growing up that never played any sports. It just wasn't something that my family was able to do. When I became an adult, I thought... Okay, let me let me throw my hat in the ring and try something. I went from zero to 100," she said laughing. "It was really something that I had absolutely no experience doing. You would think on paper there's no reason I should be interested in it but it ended up being a ton of fun. It also helped me to learn more about like what I'm able to withstand during stressful situations."

Casupanan removed some of the stress from her life by making a big life change before leaving for *Survivor*. She quit her public relations, communications job. Casupanan wanted to wipe the slate clean and rediscover herself.

"It was a sacrifice but it was also one of those things where I felt like it was time for that chapter to end. What better opportunity is there to start a new fresh chapter then go do the craziest adventure of life? It meant changes my lifestyle. Something that I use to define myself is now gone. It really set me up to be able to enter the game knowing there was no strings attached. I just am the way that I am," she said proudly.

Casupanan's strategy going into the game was simple. She was going to use her perceived weaknesses as strengths.

"I know that I'm a smaller player, people look at me and probably think I'm not going to be able to physically contribute to the tribe. So, I had to figure out a game play for mitigating that potential risk but at the same time not being a physical threat, not being out in front as someone who could potentially go out and win a bunch of competitions. I knew that that was my strength too. So I thought, if I know that people are going to look at me and they're not really going to think that I'm a big threat then how do I use that to really go undercover and fly under the radar," she said.

Survivor 41 debuts with a two-hour premiere tonight at 8:00 ET on Global TV.

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