

SURVIVOR: NICARAGUA

UNITED STATES, SEASON 21

EPISODE ONE

MEDALLION OF POWER: Players arrive in two groups of nine, although not yet given their tribe buffs. First, they must search an adjacent lagoon for a 'Medallion of Power', which (in theory) gives a huge unknown advantage in the game. Once it is found and collected by a player, contestants are sorted into their tribes: those under 30 on La Flor in yellow, those over 40 on Espada in blue, those in their 30s sent to The Amazing Race. The player who collected the Medallion and their tribe are then given the choice of keeping it and its unknown powers or taking flint and fishing gear, giving whichever option is not taken to the opposing tribe.

GETTING TANKED: One player must stand at the top of a tower and use a bucket to pour water from a large barrel down a row of gutters held by five of their tribemates (standing on a steep, staircase-like tower) so that it flows into a second barrel on one end of a seesaw scale. When this barrel is full, the scale will tip and drop a net containing fifteen giant puzzle pieces. The remaining four tribe members must then use these pieces to cover a giant table, revealing their tribe name. If the tribe with the Medallion of Power wishes, they can give it to the other tribe in exchange for having one full bucket of water (about 20% of their needed volume) already poured directly into their lower barrel at the start of the challenge. The first tribe to finish the puzzle wins Immunity.

EPISODE TWO

HAY MATE: One player at a time must dive into a mudpit and crawl beneath a rope grate to the far end, then run to a stack of hay and search it for a ball, depositing it on the tribe mat for the next player to begin. Once all four balls have been collected (from different haystacks), one player must remove the fabric covering each ball and throw it to the first of three other tribe members, who must use wooden shields of different shapes to ferry the balls into a barrel at the far end of the course. They cannot use their hands to catch or throw a ball, and if one is dropped the ninth tribe member must collect it and throw it back to the unwrapper to start the process again. If the tribe with the Medallion of Power wishes, they can give it to the other tribe in exchange for having one ball already placed in their barrel at the start of the challenge. The first tribe to get four balls in their barrel wins Immunity, and a choice of either fishing gear or a tarp and rope.

EPISODE THREE

GET BARRELED: Tribes must collect a series of ten colour-coded barrels from a clearing, placing each of them on an individual platform on the adjacent beach once they have all been collected and rolled back to the starting point. They must then throw sandbags at the barrels, trying to have them come to rest on top of the barrels. Only one tribe member can throw at a time, and tribes can switch whenever they want. If the tribe with the Medallion of Power wishes, they can give it to the other tribe in exchange for having two barrels and two sandbags already in place at the start of the challenge. The first tribe to get sandbags on all ten barrels wins Immunity and an assortment of herbs, fruit, and basic cooking supplies.

EPISODE FOUR

SEARS AND DOERS: Tribes must select one member to act as their 'caller'. Six other tribe members will be blindfolded and handcuffed together in pairs, and the caller must guide them through a clearing to collect a complete set of ten product-placed survival items, bringing them back to their tribe mat. Once all ten items have been returned, one pair must be guided to collect a set of keys and unlock a treasure chest before carrying it back to the tribe mat. If the tribe with the Medallion of Power wishes, they can give it to the other tribe in exchange for having two items already on their mat at the start of the challenge. The first tribe to get their unlocked chest to their mat wins Immunity and their choice of any three of the survival items.

EPISODE FIVE

'OUT WITH THE OLD...': Immediately prior to the below challenge, the members of each tribe must draw rocks from a tribal bag. One rock in each bag is tribe-coloured, while all of the others are black. The two players who select the tribe-coloured rocks become 'captains'. They will each be given a pen and paper and must

select half of the members of the opposing tribe to join them on their own tribe. The players selected by each captain will switch, while the players not selected will remain on their own tribes. The Medallion of Power is also retired at this point.

DON'T LET YOUR BALLS DROP: In rounds, two tribe members must roll a ball up a steep ramp so that it turns around a corner at the top and rolls back down the triangular board to the bottom, pachinko-style, where two members of the opposing tribe must catch it and place it in a gutter behind them to be rolled again. The pair of catchers which lasts the longest without dropping a ball wins a point for their tribe. The first tribe to score three points wins two egg-laying chickens and a rooster.

SPIT IT OUT: Three tribe members will be strapped to a large carnival-style wheel with their heads facing 'outwards', while three other tribe members must spin the wheel to force their heads underwater. They must take a mouthful of water and keep it until they reach the apex of their rotation, where they must spit it into a funnel, flowing into a tube containing a ball. When the tube is full enough to tip, the ball will roll down a gutter to the remaining two tribe members, who must throw it at a ramp with five rectangular tiles placed in holders on it, attempting to break the tiles. The first tribe to break all five of their tiles wins Immunity.

EPISODE SIX

KITTY LITTER: In the first round of this two-stage challenge, one tribe at a time will compete for individual Immunity (as each tribe will go to Tribal Council and vote a member out). Each player must use run to an individual area of sand and use a paddle to dig in it to find a quoit, flinging it over their shoulder into a basket strapped to their backside before returning to the start and placing the ring on a bar. The first player to collect and return all three of their buried quoits wins Immunity, and the right to compete for their tribe in the second-round Reward Challenge. They will each be given a small group of quoits, and must throw them onto any of three hooks on a target while standing on a small tribe mat. If they run out of quoits, they must collect any which land on the ground before continuing. The first player to get three quoits onto the target wins the right for their tribe to attend Tribal Council first, and a feast of chicken and beef skewers to be eaten while watching the other tribe's questioning.

EPISODE SEVEN

JUMP SHOT: With tribes taking turns, one player at a time must run along a platform next to a pool and attempt to throw a ball into a raised net goal at the far end. While they do so, one member of the opposing tribe must stand on a small perch in the middle of the pool and attempt to catch or deflect the ball any way necessary. If the ball lands in the net, the thrower's tribe earns a point. The first tribe to score five points wins a trip to a local farm, with a full breakfast.

CANNON SKI-BALL: Two tribe members will stand atop a tower and roll a cannonball down a steep, skijump-like ramp, aiming to break five surfboard-shaped tile targets on the ground painted in the opposing tribe's colour. While they do so, two tribe members on the ground will use ropes to raise and lower the ramp's slope angle, while the other two will use a separate rope to direct the ramp left and right. There are two different sizes of cannonball available, and rollers can stand anywhere on the four-level platform to roll. The first tribe to break all five targets wins Immunity.

EPISODE EIGHT

'LIBERTAD OR DEATH': La Flor receives a treemail message telling them to pack up their camp and travel to Espada, and a key. Meanwhile, Espada receives a locked box and instructions they can open it when the key arrives. When La Flor arrives, they open the chest to reveal new red buffs and snacks to celebrate the merge.

PUSH ME PULL U: Each player is given two ornamental metal handles with two small loops attached, and must use them to hold a steel spear in the air by holding them as far apart as possible while the spear is wedged between the loops. When a player reduces the tension, the spear will drop and smash a tile on the ground, eliminating them from the challenge. The last player of each gender with their tile intact wins Immunity.

EPISODE NINE

THREE LITTLE PIGS O-COURSE: Players are randomly divided offscreen into two teams of five, with the last player sitting out and having to support a team. Teams must make their way through a cubic frame loaded with hay (or 'straw'), then work together to release a key from an overhead metal coil. After crawling beneath a rope grate, they must crash through a second frame filled with sticks to reach another overhead coil, again collecting the key. They must then get through a net crawl to the final overhead coil, before crashing through two mock brick walls in the final frame to reach a set of three locks. The first team to open all three locks and raise their flag wins a zipline canopy tour and a barbecue feast. If the player sitting out supported the winning team, they will also participate in the reward.

FACT

The teams wound up conveniently being divided by gender, with an extra man sitting out. The odds of this happening? One in 462.

FLASHBACK: Players will be shown a series of symbols, one at a time, and must use provided cards to repeat the sequence, one symbol at a time. If they show the incorrect symbol at any point, they are eliminated. If multiple players reach the end of the sequence without error, a longer sequence will be presented. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE TEN

BARREL BRIDGE: Players are divided through an offscreen schoolyard pick into two teams of five. Each team is given four large barrels, two planks, and ten feet of rope, which they must use to cross a marked section of beach without touching the ground. If any player touches the ground, the entire team must return to the start. The first team to finish wins a lunch trip to the Cerro Negro volcano.

SPLASH BACK: Each player must stand on a tilted ledge above a pool, leaning backwards over the water and holding on to a knotted rope for support. Every five minutes, they must move their hands down one section of the rope, forcing them to lean farther backwards and making it harder to stay balanced. When a player lets go of their rope and falls in the water, they are eliminated. The last player remaining dry wins Immunity.

EPISODE ELEVEN

Clip show, no challenges.

EPISODE TWELVE

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS: Players will be divided through an offscreen schoolyard pick into two teams of four, with the last player sitting out and having to support a team. Team members will be harnessed together and must untie a series of knots to release an eight-foot-tall padded dummy from a table, then must carry it over a fence, across a series of rope and haybale barriers, and through a tunnel littered with tightly-strung ropes to the finish line. If they drop the dummy at any point, they must return to the start of the current obstacle and try again. The first team to reach the finish wins a trip to a mock 'cinema' for a 'sneak peek' of the then-new movie *Gulliver's Travels*, with snacks.

FACT

As much of the tribe's camp, including their food and shelter, burned down in the previous episode, members of the winning team are given the option of forgoing the reward in exchange for the tribe receiving a new tarp and container of rice.

FACT

Two players announce their intentions to quit the game after this challenge. As a result, there is no Immunity Challenge in this episode and their torches are snuffed at Tribal Council that evening. (In order to end with a Final Three, one of the next two episodes was planned to have two Immunity Challenges and two Tribal Councils. As Episode Fourteen featured the traditional loved one visit in a challenge that due to its structure had to have been planned for the visit, the Reward Challenge in the next episode must have originally been planned as an Immunity Challenge.)

EPISODE THIRTEEN

SECOND CHANCE: In this three-stage challenge, players will complete a series of tasks based on elements from previous challenges. Firstly, they must dive into a mudpit and crawl beneath a rope grate to the end, where they must dig in an individual haystack to find a ball, which they must unwrap and bounce off a stationary

shield into a barrel. The first four players to finish advance to the second stage, where they must use a stick to collect a key from an overhead metal coil, then use it to unlock a chest containing four sandbags and throw them all onto a barrel from behind a marked line. The first two players to finish advance to the final round, where they must use a paddle to dig in an small sandpit for three buried quoits, then throw them onto hooks on a shield-shaped target. The first player to finish wins an overnight resort trip with two players of their choice.

MONEY BOX: In the first round of this two-stage challenge, each player is belted to the end of a rope wound around a hitching post. They must unwind themselves from the post to slacken the rope, then run across a clearing to grab a bag of 'coins' (puzzle pieces) from the ground. There is more than enough rope to reach the bags when fully unwound, and players are allowed to run for them whenever they wish. The first three to collect their bags advance to the final round, where they must use the ten puzzle pieces from their bags to complete a rectangular prism inside a box frame (on top of three stationary pieces), closing the box once complete. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

EPISODE FOURTEEN

POOLIN' AROUND: For this challenge, each player will be paired with their visiting loved one. The player must run up a plank and jump into a pool, untying a bag of lettered tiles from a buoy before returning it to their loved one. They must then repeat the process for a second bag. Once both bags have been returned, the loved one must open them and use the sixteen tiles to spell a three-word phrase that fits a set of provided blanks. The first pair to finish wins a sailing trip along the Nicaraguan coast, with two pairs of the winning player's choice.

COAT OF ARMS: Each player will be blindfolded and harnessed to a rope that winds over and under a group of hurdles. They must make their way along the rope to a shield with eight metal shapes on it, using their hands to memorise their positions, before untying three bags of puzzle pieces and carrying them back across the course to a solving station. They must then open the bags and use the metal shapes inside to recreate the correct shield, inserting them into holes on a replica shield. There are also five decoy shapes (coloured red for Probst's convenience) in the bags to make it harder. The first player to correctly recreate the shield wins Immunity.

EPISODE FIFTEEN

DONKEY DIG: Players must run across a clearing to a group of posts, showing a question about Nicaragua and two possible answers, then untie a bag of puzzle pieces attached to the post showing the correct answer before returning. If they are correct, the bag will contain coloured pieces, and they can travel to the next trio of posts. If they are incorrect, the pieces will be black and they must collect the right bag before continuing. Once they have collected all three bags, they must use the twenty-two pieces to solve a puzzle, displaying the season's logo when complete. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

BALANCING POINT: Each player must use one hand to balance a sword vertically on a metal shield, blade down, while using their other hand to stack coins onto the sword's ornamental handle at regular intervals. There are three different coin sizes, and each time a coin (of Probst's choosing) is placed, players have five seconds to place it. If they touch their coin piles with their free hands outside this time or if any of their coins drop, they are out of the challenge. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

SEASON OVERVIEW

This is probably the most bipolar season of Survivor challenges there has ever been. Most seasons tend to be fairly consistent in terms of challenge design, whether that means consistently good or consistently bad, but here there are some brilliant challenge ideas and some absolute shockers. It's almost kind of understandable that the first four weeks are underwhelming with the age-divided tribes, although that didn't stop the first Immunity Challenge from *Survivor: Exile Island* from being decent.

The Medallion of Power was a decent twist idea that wound up being a bust solely because it was paired with the very thing it was trying to stop – the unevenness of the age-divided tribes. The way it was handled, the older Espada were brought closer to parity with the younger La Flor for a challenge, but the moment La Flor had it it became ridiculously unbalanced. Had both tribes been balanced at the start of the game, using it

would have been an interesting strategic decision for both tribes. As is, it joins the long line of twists in recent seasons that were wasted due to their terrible executions.

The second part of Kitty Litter is especially awful, as are Flashback and Poolin' Around, and the fact we only have two episodes before the merge with two challenges. On the other hand, the first part of Getting Tanked is a cool idea, the challenges from those two-challenge premerge episodes are all awesome, and there is a marked lack of 'obstacle course with puzzle at the end' challenges in the first two-thirds of the season – the premiere's Immunity Challenge is one, but then there are no more until Episode Thirteen. Did you notice that before I told you? And did you miss them when they were absent? Exactly.



SURVIVOR: REDEMPTION ISLAND UNITED STATES, SEASON 22

EPISODE ONE

'BACK FROM THE DEAD': Sixteen new players are taken by military helicopter (loaned from the Nicaraguan Air Force) to the starting location, where they are immediately joined by two former players (Rob Mariano from seasons 4, 8, and 20 and Russell Hantz from seasons 19 and 20) who must each draw one of two buffs from an urn to select which of the two preformed tribes – Ometepe in orange or Zapatera in purple – they will join. The basic conceit behind the season's big twist is explained – players voted out instead go to 'Redemption Island' and must survive on their own there with the same supplies as they'd have at camp, and at regular intervals those on Redemption Island must compete in a 'duel' with members of each tribe watching, with the loser(s) eliminated from the game permanently, and the player remaining at select points returning to the game as a full contestant – before each tribe is given a map to their new home, where they will find a toolkit to help them build a camp.

FACT

Probst includes the two returning players in his '39 days, 18 people, one Survivor!' intro spiel, but the credits immediately afterwards do not.

PUSH IT UPHILL: Tribes must use long wooden handles to push four heavy staircase segments along a set of rails to a 'temple' wall, one at a time. Once all four segments are in place, they must run up the steps to the top of the wall, where one player must use an axe to chop through a series of nine ropes, releasing a second set of stairs at the end of a bridge. After climbing to the top of this, players must use an assortment of blocks to finish a partially-completed block pyramid puzzle, showing a pattern on all outside edges. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity and flint.

EPISODE TWO

SMASH, GRAB, SMASH: One tribe member at a time must swim across a pool and climb a ladder to a platform, then jump back into the pool while using a club to smash a hanging tile and release a key, collecting it before swimming back. Once all five keys have been returned, one tribe member must use them to open five locks on a chest with a ball inside. The remaining two tribe members must then throw the ball at a ramp with five rectangular tiles placed in holders on it, attempting to break the tiles. The first tribe to break all five of their tiles wins Immunity and fishing gear.

EPISODE THREE

JAIL BREAK: Each player must stand behind a fence, and use provided sticks and rope to build a makeshift pole. Once they have a pole they are satisfied with, they must use it to collect three keys hanging on the other side of the fence, using them to open three locks on a 'door'. The first player to walk through their door wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

SPIN CYCLE: Three tribe members will be strapped to a large carnival-style wheel with their heads facing 'outwards', while three other tribe members must spin the wheel to force their heads underwater. They must take a mouthful of water and keep it until they reach the apex of their rotation, where they must spit it into a

funnel, flowing into a tube containing a ball. When the tube is full enough to tip, the ball will roll down a gutter to the remaining tribe member, who must solve a 4x4 sliding puzzle to form a curved path, which they must roll the ball along, sinking it into a net at the far end. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity, canopy chairs, pillows, blankets, a tarp, and a lantern.

EPISODE FOUR

DOMINO EFFECT: Players will be given a set of domino-like blocks, which they must correctly line up in a row on a narrow surface made of eleven planks tilted at different angles. While they do so, they must avoid a series of tripwires that will shake the suspended surface, causing the dominos to topple too early. The first player to arrange all the tiles to knock over a ball, rolling down the final ramp and smashing a tile, wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

TOOLIN' AROUND: In this relay challenge, players must run across a wide balance beam to reach an obstacle, then complete it before returning back to the start, at which point the next player can begin. The first player must use a crowbar to open a wooden crate, collecting a shovel from inside. The second player must dig in a sandpit to find an axe. The third player must then use the axe to chop through a log, releasing two hanging saws. The next two players must use the saws to cut a series of planks from a 'wall', and two more players must collect the planks and use them to finish a ramp, fitting each piece onto a uniquely-shaped set of notches. The entire tribe must then run up the ramp to the finish platform, where the last player must untie a hammer and use it to drive nails into a table, breaking three tiles and allowing the tribe to place a toolbox on top. Players cannot complete two successive segments of the relay (with the exception of the ramp builders also running to the finish platform), but do not necessarily have to do one segment each. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity and a barbecue grill, with provided meats, vegetables, and bread.

EPISODE FIVE

CUBE CRISIS: Players must transfer one large block-shaped puzzle piece at a time to a platform. Once they have transferred all eight pieces, they must assemble them on the platform to form a 3x3x3 cube, with all of the patterned faces on the outside of the cube. The first player to finish wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

SMOKO: Each tribe must select one member as their 'caller'. They must guide their blindfolded tribe members through a simple maze to collect colour-coded bags of lettered tiles, bringing them back to a table across the maze from the caller's podium. Once all four bags have been collected, the caller must cross the course, open the bags, and use the twenty-two tiles inside to form a five-word phrase that fits a provided set of blanks. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity, pastries, and coffeemaking supplies.

EPISODE SIX

GRAPPLE & MAZE: Players must throw a grappling hook from behind a marked line to collect three bags on the ground, one at a time. Once they have all three bags, they must open one and roll the ball inside through a giant table maze to a finish hole, avoiding the decoy holes. If the ball drops through a decoy hole, they must start the entire maze again. The first player to finish wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

BEACH BALLS: Two members of each tribe must take turns using a giant slingshot to fire balls down the beach to the remaining players, who must attempt to catch them in square butterfly nets. For each launch, players must start in preset locations, touching a pole. Both tribes will fire a ball at the same time, and if a player catches a ball, regardless of who launched it, they score a point for their tribe. The first tribe to five points wins Immunity and a picnic lunch overlooking San Juan del Sur.

EPISODE SEVEN

CONCENTRATION: Players are presented a grid of twenty frames, each with a large tile face-down on top of it. Taking turns, they must flip two tiles over, attempting to find matching symbols. If they find a pair, they score a point. The first player to five points wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

CRASH COURSE: Tribes must make their way through a cubic frame loaded with hay (or 'straw'), then work together to release a bag of balls from an overhead metal coil. After crawling beneath a rope grate, they must crash through a second frame filled with sticks to reach another overhead coil, again collecting a bag. They must then get through a net crawl to the final overhead coil, before crashing through two mock brick walls in the final frame to reach a small net overhead. The first tribe to get all six of the balls into their net wins Immunity and a picnic lunch at the Cerro Negro volcano.

EPISODE EIGHT

CHIMNEY SWEEPS: Players must stand barefoot on narrow footholds attached to two walls, using only their arms to brace themselves. After fifteen minutes they must move to an even smaller foothold, and again after another fifteen minutes. If a player touches the ground, or touches the walls with any body part except their hands, arms, and feet, they are eliminated from the game. The survivor wins the right to return to the game as a full player.

FACT

Probst comments during the challenge that it has historically favoured women in the past. Which would be great and all, except the only time a woman has won the challenge was in the tribal Reward Challenge version in season 20.

'THREE INTO ONE': Immediately after the duel, the two tribes and the returning player are merged into one tribe. They are given black buffs and a map to a new beach, where they will find the traditional merge feast and another set of tools to build a camp with. Although there are currently no players on Redemption Island, it will begin a second cycle starting with this episode's Tribal Council, but while players eliminated in duels will form part of the jury, those who remain on Redemption Island will not observe events at Tribal Council.

ROLLERBALLS: Players must stand on a small log for as long as possible, while holding a round wooden tray with one hand. One ball will be placed on the tray at the start of the challenge, and two extra balls will be added at regular intervals. If a player steps off their log or drops any of their balls, they are eliminated. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE NINE

MESO SOUP: In this three-stage challenge, players will complete a series of tasks based on elements from previous challenges (though this is never openly mentioned). Firstly, each player must dig in an individual area of sand to find a club, then use it to smash a tile. The first six to do so advance to the second round, where they must collect a mouthful of water from a raised trough before crawling under it and spitting it into an individual tube across a small clearing. The first three players to fill their tubes to a marked line advance to the final round, where they must solve a tabletop replica of the block puzzle from this season's first challenge. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

GANG HANG: Players must climb onto a horizontal bar suspended over a pool, then remain there for as long as possible. After twenty minutes, they must release their arms and use only their legs to hold the bar. When a player falls into the pool, they are eliminated. The last player remaining wins Immunity. However, before the challenge players are given the option of competing or instead eating cheeseburgers and fries for the duration of the challenge.

EPISODE TEN

HOUSE OF CARDS: Each of the three competing players is given a platform with a ladder adjacent, and one hundred and fifty tiles which they must use to build a freestanding tower eight feet tall. If they run out of tiles, or if the tower collapses, they must start again. The first two players to finish (as shown by reaching a height equal with the top of a post next to the platform) win the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

MAYAN PIZZA: In the first round of this two-stage challenge, players must unwind a circular disc from the pole it is attached to without removing their hands (thus, by running around the pole in circles), then take it to a table and fit six puzzle pieces inside to form a decorative image. The first six players to finish advance to the second round, where they must complete a sixteen-piece puzzle around the outside of the original disc, which has been placed in the centre of a larger wheel. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

EPISODE ELEVEN

SURVIVOR SHUFFLEBOARD: Each player is given a shuffleboard table with three loose bars on it, that will spin on a central axis when hit. They must attempt to slide three pucks along the table and past the obstacles into a narrow 'end zone'. If any part of the puck touches the painted end zone area, it remains where it is for the duration of the challenge. The first two players to get all three of their pucks in the end zone win the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

LOG JAM: In randomly-chosen pairs, two players at a time must stand on a floating log for as long as possible, even as their motion makes the log spin. The first player to fall into the water is eliminated, and the surviving player advances to the next round. This process repeats, as the original eight players are cut to four, then to two, and finally to one player, who wins Immunity and two minutes to eat as much of a giant chocolate cake and a pitcher of milk as they can, with two players of their choice.

MEMORY: Before leaving Tribal Council after the previous vote, another Immunity Challenge will be held with a vote immediately after. Players will be shown a series of symbols, one at a time, and must use a set of provided cards to repeat the sequence, one symbol at a time. If they show the incorrect symbol at any point, they are eliminated. If multiple players reach the end of the sequence without error, a longer sequence will be presented. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE TWELVE

ROCK BLOCK: Taking turns, players must throw one wireframe ball at a time to break a set of four tiles on separate holders. The first three players to break all of their tiles win the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel. In addition, the first player to finish wins the right to decide which of the remaining players – themselves, the other two Redemption Island residents, or those who have not yet been voted out – receives a visit from their loved ones.

STEP ON UP: Players must untie a set of planks with holes in them, then take one plank at a time up a staircase to a set of missing steps to fit them in the gaps. The holes will be filled with stationary blocks, meaning each piece only fits in one hole, and players must fill in the steps from bottom to top, without any gaps (thus, if they bring the wrong piece they must return to the bottom and collect a new one). There are three sets of steps to untie and insert in three different sections of the tall staircase, and each section must be completed correctly before continuing. The first player to finish the entire staircase and climb to the top wins Immunity.

EPISODE THIRTEEN

A MAZE 'N' JIG: Players must manoeuvre a handle through a long table maze to the exit at the far end and use it to smash an adjacent tile, allowing them to collect a bag of puzzle pieces from beneath it. They must then take the bag to a solving station and use the twenty-two pieces inside the bag to assemble an image showing a temple. The first three players to finish win the right to remain on Redemption Island until the next duel.

FACT

Though the image formed with the completed puzzle is different, the actual puzzle at the end of this duel is identical to that from last season's Donkey Dig challenge.

BONE TO PICK: With one hand tied behind their back, players must use an S-shaped fish hook to snag a second hook, then attempt to pick up a third hook with this chain, then pick up a bag of puzzle pieces. Once they have the bag, they must carry it to a hanging 'fish skeleton' without dropping it and fit the pieces inside into a marked area to form part of the ribcage. They must then repeat the process with a second set of four hooks, and again with a third set of five hooks. The first player to insert the ribs so that none of them are touching each other wins Immunity and a three-course meal delivered to them at camp, which they can share with one player of their choice.

EPISODE FOURTEEN

A LEG UP: Players must stand on a crate with one foot holding an elevated seesaw steady, while a ceramic vase is perched on a small podium at the other. When a player raises or lowers their foot enough for the vase to drop, they are eliminated. The last player remaining wins the right to return to the game as a full player.

A NUMBERS GAME: Players must cross an individual balance beam, untying a bag of numbered tiles from the beam as they go, then take it to a solving station and place the numbered tiles in order from 01 to 10. They must then repeat the process three more times, collecting bags containing tiles from 11 to 30, 31 to 60, and 61 to 100. They must correctly arrange each bag before continuing. The first player to correctly arrange all 100 tiles in numerical order wins Immunity.

MESO MAZE: Players must make their way through a waist-high maze to one of four small pyramids, where they must untie a bag of puzzle pieces to raise a flag before taking it to a solving station atop a larger central pyramid, where they must use the seven tetrahexaflexagon pieces to correctly form a four-word phrase. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

SEASON OVERVIEW

Oh, man. Such an awful, awful, AWFUL season, I don't even really want to discuss it. The loss of separate Reward Challenges is enough to ruin the season, but combining the terrible Redemption Island concept with two returning players many viewers were already sick and tired of just underlines how much the producers wanted to keep them in the game for as long as possible. It doesn't help that the only new duel is the one in the season finale, and that so many of the season's challenges proper are slightly revamped versions of those from past seasons. Even the new challenges aren't particularly great – if there was one word to describe this season, it is definitely 'uninspired'. Last season had quite a few good challenges. So how is it Rollerballs and A Leg Up are basically the only remotely decent new ideas in the entire season?



SURVIVOR: SOUTH PACIFIC UNITED STATES, SEASON 23

EPISODE ONE

'THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM?': Sixteen new players arrive at the new Redemption Island arena by canoe, where they are joined by two former players (Ozzy Lusth from seasons 13 and 16 and Ben 'Coach' Wade from seasons 18 and 20) arriving by helicopter. These two must each smash one of two paint-filled eggs to select which of the two preformed tribes – Upolu in blue, Savaii in red – they will each join, then immediately compete on their behalf in the first Reward Challenge before heading to their new camps.

THRILOGY: The two completing players must climb up a twelve-foot pole to collect a wooden turtle figurine from the top, then dig under a log on the sand and crawl through the hole created, before using the turtle as the top level of a six-level Tower of Hanoi puzzle. The first player to finish wins flint and taro for their tribe.

COCONUT CONUNDRUM: Tribes must run and crawl along a zigzagging pathway, intersecting with the other tribe's path, then make their way through a frame filled with ropes strung with coconuts. They must then work together to get all nine players over a ten-foot wall, at which point one player must dig in a small sand pit to find a machete, using it to chop four ropes, releasing a large pile of coconuts. Three tribe members must then throw these coconuts into a raised net until it is heavy enough to counterbalance a second load of coconuts, raising a tribe flag. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity.

EPISODE TWO

CRATE ESCAPE: Four members of each tribe will be harnessed to ribbons wound around a maypole, and must unwind themselves by moving over, under, and around each other to release a key. Once they have the key they must unlock the remaining four tribe members, who must slide a series of giant crates around a platform in order to move the largest one out an exit hole, carrying it to the finish platform. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity, pillows, blankets, a hammock, and a sleeping mat.

EPISODE THREE

OVER-EXTENDED: Players must place a wooden figurine on top of a small podium attached to one end of a pole, then hold the pole to keep it in the air for as long as possible. At regular intervals they must use one hand to attach an extra length of wood to the bottom of the pole, making it longer and harder to keep balanced. When a player's figurine falls, they are eliminated from the game. The survivor wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

HITCHING A RIDE: One tribe member must carry a boogie board (attached to a towrope) along a group of floating beams to a platform, where they must untie a hanging bag and take it with them as four other tribe members use the towrope and a giant winch to pull them back to shore. Once five bags have been collected in this manner (with two different runners taking turns to collect them), they must be placed in partially-buried baskets and the remaining two tribe members must use a grappling hook to collect them from the top of an adjacent wall. Finally, these two players must unroll the banner segments inside and use them to form a giant version of the tribe's flag on the side of the wall. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity, cookies, and supplies for an assortment of hot drinks.

EPISODE FOUR

SANDBAGGING: Players are each given a pile of small sandbags, which they must throw onto a series of crates from behind a marked line. They can throw sandbags as quickly as they wish, but can only collect and throw one at a time. The first player to get sandbags on all ten crates wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

SHOULDER THE LOAD: Each tribe must select two men and a woman to balance a pole across their shoulders. In regular intervals, two other tribe members must hang a ten-pound sandbag from each side of a player's pole, making it harder and harder to hold. However, the decision regarding who will receive the sandbags will be made by the non-weightbearing members of the opposing tribe. When a player drops their pole, they are out of the challenge. The last tribe with any weightbearers remaining wins Immunity, two chickens, and a rooster.

EPISODE FIVE

SIMMOTION: Players must insert a ball into the top of a metal chute. When it rolls out of one of two exit holes (a track switch near the top means balls alternate exit holes), they must catch it and place it back in the top of the chute. At regular intervals, they must add additional balls, making it harder and harder to keep track of the exiting balls. The first player to drop a ball is eliminated from the game. The survivor wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

PIG OUT: With their hands tied behind their backs, tribe members must bite off as much meat as they can from a large spit-roast pig, then carry it across a clearing and spit it into their tribe's basket. The tribe which has the most meat on their basket after ten minutes wins Immunity, spices, vegetables, bread, and all of the collected meat.

EPISODE SIX

LOST IN THE SHUFFLE: Each player begins the challenge with four labelled pucks on a shuffleboard table, in a crisscrossing pattern with the other player's pucks. Taking turns, they must slide one puck along the table at a time, trying to knock their opponent's pucks off the table through a series of holes in the outside walls of the table. The last player with a labelled puck left on the table wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

LOSING FACE: Three tribe members must assemble a simple wheelbarrow from provided parts, then wheel it through a narrow shared chicane to a trough loaded with coconuts, which they must release and load into the wheelbarrow. They must then wheel it through a simple maze to a second trough, again using its contents to fill the wheelbarrow. The remaining three tribe members must disassemble the wheelbarrow and use the same parts to build a giant slingshot on a platform, then use it to fire one coconut at a time towards five large face-shaped targets, which will fall over when hit. The first tribe to hit all five targets wins Immunity and a picnic lunch at the Papasaea Sliding Rocks.

EPISODE SEVEN

GAME OF BRIDGE: Players must remove a series of twenty planks from the edges of a 'crate', then fit them into provided gaps to form a small bridge. Each plank has a unique set of holes and therefore fits in only one place on the bridge frame. Once the bridge is complete, they must cross it before taking it apart and carrying the eight planks with painted undersides to a solving table, where they must arrange them to form the symbol painted on top of the original crate. The first player to finish wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

FAMILY TIES: Prior to the challenge, tribes receive coloured paints with treemail and must decorate themselves as 'twins'. For the challenge itself, tribes must designate one pair of twins as their caller, while the other pairs are blindfolded and belted together. The callers must guide one pair of twins along a rope (which one member of the pair is also attached to) as it winds through a group of obstacles on the sand and in the water to collect a hanging bag of puzzle pieces. Each bag is at a different point along the course, and once a pair reaches the closest bag they must untie it and return it along the course to a solving station, before the next pair can begin. Once all four bags have been collected, with each pair of runners collecting two bags, the final pair of runners must open them and use only their sense of touch to arrange the eight masks inside into four identical pairs. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity and a trip to a mock 'cinema' for a 'sneak peek' of the then-new movie *Jack & Jill*, with snacks.

EPISODE EIGHT

JAIL BREAK: Each player must stand behind a fence, and use provided sticks and rope to build a makeshift pole. Once they have a pole they are satisfied with, they must use it to collect three keys hanging on the other side of the fence, using them to open three locks on a 'door'. The first player to walk through their door wins the right to return to the game as a full player.

'SECOND VERSE, SAME AS THE FIRST': Immediately after the duel, the two tribes and the returning player are merged into one tribe. They are given yellow buffs and will return to one of the two tribal beaches (almost certainly Savaii's, although this is not revealed), where they will find the traditional merge feast. Although there are currently no players on Redemption Island, it will begin a second cycle starting with this episode's Tribal Council, but while players eliminated in duels will form part of the jury, those who remain on Redemption Island will not observe events at Tribal Council.

COCONUT CRADLE: Each player must stand on a narrow plank while holding a wooden bar in each hand, with a coconut suspended on two ropes strung between the bars. At regular intervals, they must return the coconut to its starting pole and remove a small anchor twig to extend the rope, making it harder to keep the coconut balanced when it is picked up again. When a player drops their coconut, touches any part of the holder or coconut with anything except their hands, or steps down from their perch, they are out of the challenge. The last player of each gender remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE NINE

GET CRACKIN': In the first round of this two-stage challenge, players must throw one coconut at a time at a small raised sandpit, attempting to land it in a round hole in the middle. The first four players to succeed advance to the final round, where they must use rocks to crack open one coconut from a pile, take a mouthful of coconut juice, then climb up an 'obstacle tower' and slide down a pole before running to a table, where they must spit any remaining juice into a tube. They must repeat the process as many times as necessary to fill the tube to a marked line. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

BOW-DIDDLEY: Players must stand on a narrow, tilted balance beam, while balancing a ball on a girder-like curved wooden 'bow'. At regular intervals they must move farther down the beam to a narrower section, making it harder to keep the ball balanced. When a player drops their ball or steps off their beam, they are out of the challenge. The last player remaining wins Immunity. However, before the challenge players are given the option of competing or instead eating pastries and iced coffee for the duration of the challenge.

EPISODE TEN

KEEP IT UP: Each player must stand beneath a frame, proportionally sized to their own body, and use only the backs of their hands to balance two poles in the air, using the overhead brace for support. When a player lowers the arm, the corresponding pole will drop and they are eliminated from the game. The last player remaining wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

PRICE ON YOUR HEAD: Players must fill a bowl with rice and use a small cushion to balance it on their head, then walk across two seesaws to deposit it in a basket on one end of a third seesaw. If they touch their bowl or if the bowl drops, they must return to the start of the course. The first player to fill their basket enough to tip the seesaw, raising a flag, wins Immunity.

C.A.T.: Before leaving Tribal Council after the previous vote, another Immunity Challenge will be held with a vote immediately after. Players will be asked a series of multiple-choice questions based around survival skills and the local wildlife, and must show their answers using a provided cube. If a player answers a question incorrectly, they are out of the challenge. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE ELEVEN

Clip show, no challenges.

EPISODE TWELVE

OFFER IT UP: Each player is given a metal 'arm' balanced on a small pivot, and must stack ceramic dishes of Probst's choosing on a small round platform at the opposite end of the arm at regular intervals. As they continue, the stack will become taller and more unwieldy. When any of a player's dishes drop from the arm, they are eliminated from the game. The last player remaining wins the right to remain on Redemption Island until the next duel.

DEJA VU: In this two-stage challenge, players will complete a series of tasks based on elements from previous challenges. Firstly, they must throw one sandbag at a time from behind a marked line onto a colour-coded crate. The first three players to get a sandbag on all three of their crates advance to the second round, where they must use a giant slingshot to fire coconuts at three large face-shaped targets. The first player to hit all three of their targets wins Immunity, and a bush shower and massage at camp, which they can share with one player of their choice.

EPISODE THIRTEEN

PUPPET MASTER: Players must throw a grappling hook from behind a marked line to collect three bags on the ground, one at a time. Once they have all three bags, they must open one and roll the ball inside through a giant table maze to a finish hole, avoiding the decoy holes, and using only two handles to tilt the octagonal table. If the ball drops through a decoy hole, they must start the entire maze again. The first player to finish wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel, and the right to select three players who have not been voted out to win an afternoon visit from their loved ones on Redemption Island.

FLIP OUT: Starting from different corners on a hexagonal 'pineapple' game board, players must take turns flipping over an adjacent tile to show the purple underside, then stepping onto it. Players cannot stand on any purple space, and if they are unable to make any moves, they are eliminated. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE FOURTEEN

BLOCK IT OUT: Players must solve a tabletop version of the sliding puzzle from Crate Escape (and many prior seasons of this show) to release a hatchet, then use it to chop a rope, releasing a bag of puzzle pieces. They must then take the bag to a solving station and stack the four cubes inside so that each column of four cube faces shows four different colours. The first player to finish wins the right to stay on Redemption Island until the next duel.

BATMAN WALL: Players must use a rope to climb a near-vertical wall, untying one of five bags. Each time they collect a bag, they must return to the ground and take it to their solving station. Once they have untied

all five bags, each further up the wall than the last, they must remove the twenty-seven tiles inside and use the designs on one side to sort twenty-four of them into matching pairs. They must then memorise the numbers on the backs of the three unmatchable tiles, before climbing the wall to the very top and using the three numbers to open a combination lock, raising a flag. The first player to finish wins Immunity, and a pizza and garlic bread delivered to camp which they can share with a player of their choice.

EPISODE FIFTEEN

GET A GRIP: Players must climb up a ladder to the top of a round pole, then hold onto it for as long as they can. There are a series of narrow divots carved around the pole at regular intervals for assistance. When a player touches the ground, they are eliminated from the game. The survivor wins the right to return to the game as a full player.

TEETER TOWER: Standing next to a weighted seesaw, each player must use one hand to pull a lever and hold the seesaw balanced, while using the other hand and a group of domino-like tiles to assemble a tower on the other end of the seesaw, high enough to reach a point marked with an adjacent sign. If their tower falls or if they run out of tiles, they must start again. The first player to build a tower high enough to reach the sign wins Immunity.

LEI OF THE LAND: Players must select one of the 'petals' of a giant flower-shaped ropes course, then complete an obstacle to reach a bag of puzzle pieces at the far end before returning along the same obstacle to their solving station in the middle. Once they have collected all five colour-coded bags, they must open them and insert the eight flower-shaped pieces into the gaps between a series of fifteen rotatable cog-like pieces so that none of them can move. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

FACT

Even though each player only needs to collect five bags, the flower inexplicably has ten petals, each with an obstacle.

SEASON OVERVIEW

Remember how last season I mentioned the challenges were so awful they weren't even worth discussing, yet still managed to write a paragraph about them? This is even worse, and can basically be summarised by pointing out somebody thought seeing an Adam Sandler movie was a REWARD. Basically, it's getting half a star for the always-welcome Flip Out challenge, but that's it. If that wasn't here, this wouldn't even get that.



SURVIVOR: ONE WORLD UNITED STATES, SEASON 24

EPISODE ONE

'ONE WORLD, ONE BEACH': The eighteen new players are taken together by truck to their starting location, where they are divided into two tribes by gender (women on Salani in cyan, men on Manono in orange) and given sixty seconds to loot whatever supplies they can from the truck. At the end of the time limit, each tribe must carry their supplies in opposite directions around the island to their camps – which for the first (well, second) time are on the same beach. As both tribes each have a specific Hidden Immunity Idol, if a player finds the wrong idol they must give it to a member of the opposing tribe before the next Tribal Council.

FREE FALLIN': One player at a time must jump from 'a twenty-five-foot tower' into a raised circus net, then climb across and down the net to a tribe mat on the ground. When everybody has arrived, they must climb up a two-stage ladder to a sixteen-foot balance beam, cross it, and slide back to the ground. Finally, they must climb a second two-stage ladder to collect four bags of puzzle pieces and cross a V-shaped rope walkway to the finish platform, where an unknown number of tribe members must assemble the puzzle to form a 'clue to unlocking a flag'. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity and flint.

FACT

The challenge is abandoned after one player injures themselves in the first fall (which is actually only about ten feet with the way the tower is set up). All mentions to the puzzle element are edited

from the in-show explanation, though it is mentioned in the behind-the-scenes preview videos. Despite this being only one of three known challenges to be abandoned in Survivor history, it is the second in a season premiere.

EPISODE TWO

DIY KNOTS: With treemail for this Probst-less challenge, tribes receive three wooden crates and instructions to take them to a neutral location before opening any. The two largest crates contain a series of long ropes plaited around a metal ring, one per tribe, which members must untangle in order to free the metal ring. The first tribe to finish wins a tarp, but both tribes get to keep their ropes and the crate they came in.

BY THE NUMBERS: Tribe members must line up next to each other on a narrow balance beam over the water. One at a time and starting with the player farthest away, players must squeeze around each other to reach the finish platform at the end of the beam. If a player falls into the water, or if the crosser touches more than one tribemate at the same time, the current crosser must start again. The first tribe to get all eight participating members to the finish platform wins Immunity.

EPISODE THREE

SHUT YOUR TRAP: In rounds, one member of each tribe will be presented a line of assorted items, and must attempt to memorise their arrangement. When a player believes they have memorised the sequence they must pull a lever to drop a covering, hiding the lineup from both players, before moving to an adjacent station and using a group of provided items to replicate it. The first player to do so correctly wins a point for their tribe. If neither player does so correctly, they repeat the process until someone does. The first tribe to score five points wins fishing gear and a canoe with paddles.

OW PAIRS: Tribes must select one member as their 'caller', while the remaining six players are blindfolded and belted together in pairs. The caller must guide the pairs through a clearing filled with assorted barricades to one of five colour-coded water towers, where they must pull a rope to drench themselves and lower a bag of puzzle pieces. Once all five bags have been lowered, untied, and returned to a solving station at the start, the caller must use the ten pieces inside to finish a model tree on a provided base. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity.

EPISODE FOUR

COCO CONNECTION: One tribe member at a time must use a giant slingshot to fire coconuts at a 5x5 vertical frame of targets at the far end of a clearing. In order for a target to count as hit, at least half of the target must be forced out of the frame. The first tribe to hit five consecutive targets in any direction wins a choice of either 'comfort' (pillows, blankets, and a futon mattress), 'protection' (a tarp), or 'luxury' (coffeemaking supplies and donuts).

PUZZLE RELAY: Six tribe members will be handcuffed together in pairs. One pair must run across a seesaw to a puzzle station, where they must arrange nine log slices into a perfect rectangle. Once they are done, they can pick up an adjacent key and return along the seesaw to the start, at which point the next pair can begin. They must cross two seesaws to reach their puzzle, where they must use four oddly-shaped blocks to form a triangular pyramid. Once they have returned with their key, the last pair must cross three seesaws to reach the final puzzle, a 4x4 sliding tile puzzle showing the season's logo and their tribe name. When all three keys have been collected, the final tribe member must use them to open three locks, raising their tribe's flag. The first tribe to finish wins Immunity.

FACT

The winning tribe voluntarily gave up Immunity and went to Tribal Council instead of the losing tribe. (Even ignoring the idiocy of willingly giving up a tribe member, why didn't they just throw the challenge if they wanted to vote somebody out?)

EPISODE FIVE

'SCRAMBLED': Immediately prior to the challenge, players are told to drop their buffs. They must each select a paint-filled egg from a small bowl, with a different bowl for each tribe, and smash it to reveal their new tribes. Those with cyan paint in their eggs become Salani members, while those with orange paint become

Manono members. Three members of each tribe will switch, while the remaining players will remain on their current tribes.

DEAR LIZA: In a relay, four players at a time must carry a large bucket with several holes along a chicane and over a wide hurdle to a water tower, where they must fill it before blocking as many of the leaks as they can while carrying it back to the start. When they reach the start, they must pour any remaining water over a ledge into a barrel on one end of a seesaw. The first tribe to tip the seesaw, raising a flag, wins sandwich and coffeemaking supplies, and the right to remain at their beach. The losing tribe will be sent to a new beach, although they will have approximately the same amount of supplies as the winning tribe has at their beach.

BASKETBRAWL: In rounds, three players at a time (of matched genders) must race across a rectangular 'field' in the water to collect a ball released into the middle, then work to shoot it into an elevated, colour-coded net at one end of the field. One member from each tribe will start touching the pontoons beneath the two nets, which are next to each other, while the other players will start at the far end of the field. Any legal forms of physical contact are allowed in order to get contact of the ball, and the first tribe to get the ball in their net scores a point. The first tribe to score three points wins Immunity.

EPISODE SIX

COCO POPS: One tribe member at a time must climb up a stack of giant crates to a trough loaded with coconuts, then attempt to throw it onto a giant trampoline on the ground so that it bounces into one of five octagonal targets at the other end. Players can throw coconuts as fast as they can move (with each thrower returning to the ground before the next player starts climbing), and each time a target is hit it will collapse away. The first tribe to hit all five targets wins a trip to 'a Survivor-style ice cream parlour'.

FACT

Before an Immunity Challenge can be held, one player is medically evacuated from the game. As a result, the planned challenge is cancelled.

'WHAT WAS, WHAT WILL BE': Both tribes are summoned to Tribal Council, where the players not on the evacuee's tribe are debriefed on the situation. Before leaving, they are merged and given new black buffs. They will return to their original shared beach for the remainder of the game.

EPISODE SEVEN

SEA TURTLES: Players are randomly divided offscreen into two teams of six. One team member must dig a hole beneath a fence on the beach and climb under, then crawl beneath a wooden grate to reach a group of four flags. They must dig beneath one of the flags to find a bag of puzzle pieces, before returning along the course to the start. Once four players have collected bags, one at a time, the remaining two team members must open them and use the thirty-five pieces inside to assemble a mosaic turtle in a provided frame. The first team to finish wins pizzas and beer away from camp.

ROLLERBALL: Players must stand on a small plank for as long as possible, while holding a round wooden tray with one hand. One ball will be placed on the tray at the start of the challenge, and two extra balls will be added at regular intervals. If a player steps off their log or drops any of their balls, they are eliminated. The last player remaining wins Immunity.

EPISODE EIGHT

7UP: Players will be divided offscreen by schoolyard pick into two teams of five, with one player left out and unable to win. One team member at a time must slide down a steep waterslide to the beach below and wade to retrieve a large floating 'puzzle crate' (with partial images painted on each face), unclipping it and bringing it back to a platform on shore. Players already on the beach from prior trips can assist in retrieving the heavy crates as they see fit. Once all five crates have been retrieved, the team members must work together to arrange them on their platform with two extra crates so that a tribal image is displayed on top. The first team to finish wins a barbecue feast with unlimited product-placed soft drink. In addition, the winners will get to bring a cooler containing bottles of the soft drink back to camp.

ODD-SHAPED BOTTOMS: In the first round of this two-stage challenge, players must each manoeuvre three bags of puzzle pieces from one end of a rope wound over, under, and around a ladder bridge to the other.

While doing so, they must also move from one end of the bridge to the other, returning to the start if they fall. The first four players to finish advance to the final round, where they must open them and use the sixty blocks inside (each with a unique uneven bottom) to finish a rectangular prism on a provided base, showing a mask design. The first player to finish wins Immunity.

EPISODE NINE

DIY LADDER TREE GOLF: With treemail, players are given all of the props for this Probst-less challenge. They will be randomly divided into two teams of five, and must take turns throwing a bolo onto a tree-like frame with five horizontal bars worth differing point values, with the largest bar at the bottom being worth one point and the smallest at the top being worth five). If a bolo wraps around a bar, they score the relevant number of points for their team. The team with the highest overall score after everybody has had one throw wins a seafood feast on a nearby island.

WHEN IT RAINS, IT POURS: Players must each stand barefoot on a small plank, with one hand above them chained to an overhead bucket of water. When a player steps off the plank or lowers their arm, the bucket will tip to drench them, and they are eliminated. At various points as the challenge continues, players are given the option of voluntarily stepping down in order to receive assorted food rewards. The last player remaining dry wins Immunity.

EPISODE TEN

SURVIVOR AUCTION: With treemail, players are each given five hundred dollars in American currency, which will be used to bid on an assortment of items – three donuts and an iced coffee, corn chips and a margarita, a protein shake with two bananas, a bush shower and a toothbrush for immediate usage, BLT sandwich with chips and soft drink, peanut butter and chocolate, a letter from home (later made valid for all players for the same price the winner paid), an advantage in the Immunity Challenge, and a mystery item (a strawberry cake to be shared with the tribe, but with only one minute to eat it) – in an auction. Bids increase in twenty-dollar increments, and players cannot pool money or share items unless otherwise stated. The auction will end without warning.

RETURN FROM THE DEAD: In this three-stage challenge, players will complete a series of tasks based on elements from previous challenges. Firstly, they must each untie a series of plaited ropes to release a metal ring. The first three players to finish advance to the second round, where they (and the player who won the advantage in the auction) must climb up a stack of crates to a trough of coconuts, which they must bounce off a trampoline into an octagonal, colour-coded target. The first two players to hit all three of their targets advance to the final round, where they must use a giant slingshot to fire coconuts at a 3x3 frame of targets. The first player to hit three targets (with at least half of the target falling from the frame) in a row in any direction wins Immunity.

FACT

The challenge is introduced with a 'Day 27' chyron... although they somehow return to camp after the challenge on 'Day 26'.

EPISODE ELEVEN

TOUCHY SUBJECTS: Players are each represented by an effigy attached to a plank, held out of a fire by a rope secured in three places. They will be given a survey to answer in private, then will be gathered and asked the same questions. This time, they must guess the answer most commonly given by the eight remaining players. Each time a player selects the correct answer, they will be allowed to use an axe to chop through a section of another player's rope. After a player's rope is cut three times, their effigy will drop into the fire and they are out of the challenge. The last player remaining wins a picnic lunch on a nearby island with two players of their choice.

SLIP SLIDING AWAY: In the first round of this three-stage challenge, two players at a time must slide along a greased surface, collecting a quoit from the middle before continuing to the far end and throwing it onto one of three hooks from behind a marked line. If they miss the hooks they must collect the quoit before trying again. The first player in each randomly-selected pair to finish advances to the second round, where they must repeat the process with two quoits against a new opponent. The two winners advance to the final round, where they must repeat the process with three quoits. The first player to get all three of their quoits on the

hooks wins Immunity.

EPISODE TWELVE

CONNECTING WITH LOVED ONES: Players and their loved ones will be harnessed together, and to a rope that spans the length of a long hitching post but is held secure by a series of additional ropes. They must slacken the other ropes in order to manoeuvre themselves along the rope from one end to the other. The first pair to finish wins an afternoon feast with two pairs of the player's choice.

I HOLD ON: Players must stand on a log over the water, holding a towrope behind them above their hips, for as long as possible. In regular intervals, the length of the towrope will increase via winch, forcing players to lean forward. When a player falls into the water, they are out of the challenge. The last player remaining dry wins Immunity.

EPISODE THIRTEEN

SPINNING WHEEL: Players must unwind a circular disc from the pole it is attached to without removing their hands (thus, by running around the pole in circles), then repeat the process twice more with larger wheels. Once they have all three, they must take them to a solving station and fit them together to form a 'decoder', spinning them until three different numbers are displayed in a column on the wheels among several decoy half-numbers (which either have no matching half or are impossible to align). Finally, they must use these numbers in some order to form a three-digit combination, allowing them to pull a lever and raise a flag. The first player to raise their flag wins an overnight stay on a yacht with two players of their choice.

BONE TO PICK: With one hand tied behind their back, players must use an S-shaped fish hook to snag a second hook, then attempt to pick up a third hook with this chain, then pick up a bag of puzzle pieces. Once they have the bag, they must carry it to a hanging 'fish skeleton' without dropping it and fit the pieces inside into a marked area to form part of the ribcage. They must then repeat the process with a second set of four hooks, and again with a third set of five hooks. The first player to insert the ribs so that none of them are touching each other wins Immunity.

EPISODE FOURTEEN

BALANCE BEAM MAZE: Players must untie a series of knots to open a gate, then run across a maze of tilted balance beams (returning to the start if they fall off), then climb onto a raised trapeze net and untie five colour-coded bags of puzzle pieces from different points on the net. Once they have collected all five bags they must take them to a solving station, then use the forty-two pieces inside to solve a puzzle, revealing a cryptic clue to three numbers in a combination. Finally, they must climb up a net, ramp, and ladder to their combination lock. The first player to release a metal bar from their combination lock, raising a flag, wins Immunity.

OPERATION BALANCE BUILD: Players must use a two-pronged handle to pick up a wooden 'bowl' from a table, then across a clearing and through a metal frame (balanced on a spring) to a small podium attached to the top. They must repeat the process ten times, avoiding knocking the frame hard enough to tip their stack of bowls. If any bowls fall at any point, they must carry them back to the starting point and try again. The first player to successfully stack ten bowls on their podium wins Immunity.

SEASON OVERVIEW

Following a season of inconsistent challenges in Nicaragua and two that were complete busts from top to bottom, all this season really needed to do was ditch the Redemption Island concept (which could definitely have worked, as it has in multiple foreign versions, though not with the current producers) and provide us with some new challenge ideas. Did they succeed? Yes and no.

It's great that Redemption Island is gone, and obnoxious returning players with it (although that frankly just underlines how the producers were using it to ensure the returnees lasted as long as possible, and therefore how little confidence they really had in the new players to provide decent television). It's also great that the Reward Challenges are back, including one in the second elimination cycle *for the first time in nine seasons*. And as much as the gender-division gimmick has worn thin, it's also good that the challenges during that

phase of the game the challenges seemed fairly even without pandering towards the tired, false, obnoxious 'women are weak' stereotype.

On the other hand, the challenges this season really aren't all that crash hot. The DIY challenges are lame beyond belief, the two coconuts-as-ammunition challenges are both fine but we really only needed one, and there are far too many recycled and adapted challenges for a season that isn't self-referential. Especially as a number of them have been seen recently (including three from just two seasons ago, as if to say, 'it really isn't that horrible! Trust us!', when in fact it was just as horrible as we all thought), it was a terrible idea to recycle so much. There are a small handful of decent original ideas in the season – Shut Your Trap, Dear Liza, and Operation Balance Build – but none of them is executed particularly well, and even if they had been they still would have buckled under the mediocrity around them. I'm basically giving it this rating because though nothing is amazing this season, it also doesn't plumb to the depths experienced in the three seasons prior. It doesn't truly deserve it, let's be honest, but it's just nice to have a season that doesn't average out to 'awful' in terms of challenges.

