

# 'Survivor' gives us something to be surprised about

Unlike most media events, this one leaves viewers clueless on what to expect

By TIM CUPRISIN  
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The presidential nominations were wrapped up months ago. Polls take the nation's pulse daily. The next "Star Wars" movie is sure to make gazillions of dollars.

But who'll win that million bucks tonight on "Survivor"?

With the threat of legal action from CBS preventing leaks, we've got a true rarity here: a national surprise.

Up to 40 million of us will watch at 7 p.m. — locally on WDJT-TV (Channel 58) — as Wisconsin's truck-drivin' Susan Hawk matches wits with wily corporate trainer Richard Hatch, crotchety ex-Navy man Rudy Boesch and duplicitous river guide Kelly Wiglesworth.

"This is an old-fashioned, rip-roaring good story," said Robert Thompson, head of Syracuse University's Center for the Study of Popular Television. "It's like killing off a character in 'ER' every week."

There will be parties in homes and taverns as fans gather to cheer — and sometimes laugh — at the castaways. Of course, a lot of Wisconsin viewers will

pull for Susan, whose broad vowels sound pretty familiar, eh?

Susan's brother Mark Schefus sure will be pulling for her, as he watches with his friends.

"I got a gut feeling that she takes third," says the 34-year-old mechanic, who works alongside his dad, Dennis, and older brother Jeff in the family's auto repair business in Waukesha.

Even if he's wrong, she'll still be plain, old Susie to him.

"Put it this way, if she wins the million dollars, I don't expect her to change one bit," he said. "She won't go out and buy new clothes. She always wears jeans and a T-shirt."

The appeal of Susan and "Survivor" stretches far beyond the borders of America's Dairyland or one mere TV network. It's a topic not only on CBS news shows, but on ABC and NBC. And the Vegas oddsmakers have weighed in.

Johnny Avello, director of race and sports at Bally's Las Vegas, told NBC's "Today" show Tuesday that Susan has a good shot.

"She's a rough one. . . . I think the other players are thinking, 'If we vote Susan off, she may show up at our doorstep next week trying to get revenge, so we better be careful on how we vote.'"

Take into account that Avello's early picks to win were losers Sean Kenniff and Gretchen Cordy. "We're not always on the money," he said.



From top: Richard Hatch, Kelly Wiglesworth, Rudy Boesch and Susan Hawk, a truck driver from Eagle, are the last four survivors on CBS' hit show.

## INSIDE

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■ **Trivia:** Take our "Survivor" quiz / **Cue**

## IF YOU TUNE IN

The final "Survivor" episode **airs tonight** on CBS at 7 p.m. on WDJT-TV (Channel 58).