



## **Todd Herzog: 22, Gay-and a Millionaire**

By [Windy City Media Group](#)

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He's planning to buy a small, black, fast sportscar with a great sound system. And he's also going to go on some vacations, likely to Europe and Egypt.

Todd Herzog certainly now has the money to do just about anything he wants.

An openly gay Mormon from Utah, the 22-year-old Herzog on Dec. 16 won the 15th edition of Survivor and the \$1 million top prize, becoming the youngest winner in the show's history. He edged Courtney Yates, a 26-year-old waitress from New York; and Amanda Kimmel, a 23-year-old hiking guide and former beauty queen from Los Angeles.

"This is unreal, unbelievable to me. I'm so excited I can't even tell you," Herzog said 48 hours after joining the exclusive millionaire's club. "It really has not hit me yet, [ mostly because ] I've been too busy, sitting in hotel rooms talking [ to media ] on the phone.

"I can't wait to get outside and feel like ... a millionaire."

Herzog attended Pleasant Grove High School in Utah, and then two years at Utah Valley State College. He was a flight attendant for SkyWest Airlines, but has since quit that job. He also previously worked as a manager at a movie theater and at a major theme park. Herzog has previously lived in Seattle, Orlando and Denver.

"I think I was able to win it because I really have a passion for the game," he said. "I think I was able to show that, I went out there with one goal and that was to make it until the end. And I found the right people to help me get there. I made some great choices in my alliances and just slid my way to the top."

The diminutive Herzog certainly was not the strongest participant in China and probably not the smartest either. But he certainly was, for all 39 days, the most strategic.

Herzog said he was most nervous the time at tribal council when James could have pulled the immunity idol, but didn't. "Other than that, I felt pretty confident throughout the game," he said.

The show was filmed last summer and he returned home in early August, not knowing the finale results for more than four months, which, he said, "felt like 14 years; I was dying [ to know. ] "

Herzog said he's uncertain of his immediate future, be it returning to school or the airline, or just taking some time off. He has no desire to work in the Hollywood industry.

"I'm a people person. I love adventure; I love to travel; I love to build things and create things," said Herzog, whose hobbies include traveling, shopping and drinking coffee. He also enjoys surfing, biking and boating.

Herzog is the second openly gay winner on Survivor. Richard Hatch was the show's first.

"I want people to realize that it's OK to be who you are and I really hope I can help kids, especially young ones who are struggling with [ their sexuality. ] I want them to know that, yes, they are normal people, with a reason and that people will love them no matter what, and that you can do whatever you put your mind to," Herzog said. "This was my goal, my dream."

Herzog was raised Mormon, in a very strict, conservative town. Coming out, he said, "was extremely hard; I was scared."

And coming out, well, didn't exactly happen as he wanted.

At 19, Herzog had a best friend for eight years. Herzog was committed to never act on his feelings but, instead, the friend acted and the two kissed.

The friend then wrote Herzog a letter, stating his love for him. Herzog accidentally left the letter in his kitchen and his mom found the letter.

"I lost some friends [ when I came out ] and my mom went through a really hard stage, but I found out really quick who loved me for who I am and who didn't," he said.

Herzog said he is now dating "a nice kid from Utah who's a good guy and just makes me smile." The two have been dating for "quite a while," he added.

"If I can make a difference in anybody's life, I want to do it. In anyone's life," he said.

Herzog has attended Pride parades in the past and, yes, he "absolutely" would be willing to be a parade's grand marshal.

He said being out on the show was not something he worried about before the show started, or during taping. "I just figured that, if anyone had a problem with [ my sexuality ] , I would vote them off. A lot of America does not tolerate people who are prejudice, including prejudice to gay people," he said. "I'm proud of who I am."

Herzog said he definitely would participate in another round of Survivor, but would not comment whether or not he will participate this February in the next round of Survivor, set to begin airing in February. It will pit Survivor fans against former Survivor contestants, including one from Survivor: China.

Getting To Know: Todd Herzog

Birthday: Jan. 29, 1985

It's a fact: Is allergic to cats, rabbits and shrimp.

Family: Has one brother ( Tyler ) and three sisters ( Brandy, Kimmi and Tori ) .

Best friend on Survivor: Courtney.

Best part of Survivor: China: "I loved the fact that I got to see a beautiful culture, an amazing country and experience it with people who I will never forget."

Worst part of Survivor: China: The boredom. "You're outside 24/7 in the mud with absolutely nothing to do except talk to people. So, yeah, there were times when I lost my mind."

Herzog's perfect hair: "I guess I was lucky [ during the show. ] My hair was so dirty, with so much nasty crap in it ... it just stayed up and looked like it does every day. That was funny." ( Herzog admitted he once tried to look at his hair in the reflection of the water, but it did not work, he said. )

On Jeff Probst: "Awesome."

On Mark Burnett: "Amazing, a total hero."

On China: "A crazy country with a great culture."

On Jean-Robert: "A tool."

On James: "A machine."

On Courtney: "Baby doll."

On himself: "Crazy kid with a big sense of adventure."

*Written By Ross Forman*

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