

Thanks to Bill Ingram of Reality News Online for asking a question that appears below !

Let me say off the bat. It was HARD for me to make the cuts. I didn't want to cut people that early, but we had established the rules and tests, and I had to stick to them. I knew exactly what I was looking for in each test, and I was going to cut someone with each.

In the show, you see me calling each contestant at their homes. What we told them was that they were in the final 25. That I would be calling them to let them know if they had made it or not. That's why they were so excited. They didn't know if they were in or out till I called. It also meant I was going to have their full attention when I called. That was important.

During the call, I told them repeatedly "the game was on the minute they walked in the door." I wanted it clear to them that something was coming immediately. If they asked a question, my response, in order to be fair was exactly the same. "The game starts the minute you walk in the door"

#### **The first test was "You don't get a 2nd chance to make a first impression".**

I had some fun with Mario and Dominic to try to break some of the tension that was in the room, but also to let them know that I'm not against them taking chances and calculated risks. That's a theme that will reoccur during the game.

Making the cuts were very, very hard for me. Maybe it didn't come across well on TV, but it was very hard for me to cut people that early. They all came with high expectations and to cut them before that got going was hard. Honestly, when I designed the game, I had no idea how hard it would be to stand up there and actually tell someone they were cut so soon.

Rich did the poorest job of making a first impression. I realized he wasn't being directly derogatory with his stupid comment, but my first impression when I heard it certainly that he was. More importantly, the other players, realizing that there were tests going on right from the start, stuck to getting to know the other contestants. No one else took the bait from Rich and talked about the game in anything resembling a derogatory tone. In fact, those around Rich avoided the subject completely.

Rich was the only one that even created any questions about the first impression. He actually saved me. I was concerned that I might have to cut someone because they weren't polite...didn't stand up when the women came in the room, that type of thing. I definitely didn't want to do that. Rich gave me an out.

As it turned out, Rich has an issue with saying things at the wrong time and his wife warned him to keep his mouth shut.

#### **The next test was Meeting Expectations**

Laurel was the easiest of the cuts. She was nothing like she had presented herself. Nice girl. But not what she billed herself to be.

Grayson and William were on the fence. We had several options depending on how many people I thought didn't live up to expectations, each of which led to the final test, "can you deal with pressure" (for instance if only 2 had issues, it would have been Laurel and either Grayson or William playing Jenga)

#### **Test 3.. Can you handle pressure ?**

I thought the Jenga game was perfect. It requires concentration and coolness under pressure. What could be more pressure packed than playing with 1mm dollars at stake 6 hours after you had walked in the door ? I really thought with all the pressure, the game would be over in a few minutes. Boy was I wrong. They both were amazing. You could cut the tension in the room with a knife.

As the game went on, I was rooting for Grayson, but William was brilliant. Not only in how he played the game, but also in how he used his antics to put the pressure on Grayson and off himself. I wish we could have shown all the stupid stuff he was doing.

Grayson deserved a ton of credit for ignoring every bit of it and keeping her cool. It was unfortunate that she lost.

I know people wanted me to eliminate William because of how he acted, but the test was established. The loser was going to be cut. William was the coolest under pressure, won the game and earned the right to stay.

The Benefactor is not about who I like the most. I know exactly what I am looking for from each test. These are tests for success, not who I want to have a drink with. This is a single elimination event. Who ever is standing at the end gets 1mm dollars.

I tried to make the tests and the message from the tests reflect the challenges we all need to go through in our efforts to be successful. Not just in business, but in whatever is important to any of us..

During the taping, I would ask the contestants what they thought the game was about. As they would say, it's the game of life. Only in reality shows do they tell you that your success will be determined based on clearly established lists of criteria that you know in advance. I didn't want to be like every reality show and more importantly, as a reality show, I wanted The Benefactor to be a true reflection of what it takes to be successful

Life is unpredictable to all of us. I wanted the tests to be unpredictable. The contestants and audience don't know from where and when the next tests are coming and what they will be. They do know however that I will be as fair as I know how to be.

One thing that I was proud of, was that with so much at stake, all but the first cut, Richard, came up to me and gave me a big hug and thank you for giving them an opportunity and for later cuts, how much they learned.

Thanks to Bill Ingram for the following question.

Is there a chance players could save themselves after you tell them to leave or after you make a decision? For example, if you told Grayson and William to play Jenga and then Grayson, perhaps, reaches out, knocks over the tower on purpose and makes a moving speech about life being more important than a parlor game, would you seriously consider retracting your decision? Would you ever take back a decision for a good reason?

No. As I said above. I knew exactly what I was looking for in each. The tests were very specific and I wanted to be fair to those who did well in the tests. Also, remember, the game isn't about 1 day. There were a lot of challenges still to be encountered. Just because a contestant showed an admirable quality, or an unadmirable quality in the first show, doesn't mean they won't show a completely different side in the future. Which they did.

The show took many a twist and turn. Not just for the contestants, but for me. Contrary to what people think, and again, maybe the first episode didn't show is enough. I'm not a host of the show. I'm a participant. The choice of tests, how they are responded to, and the decisions I make are all influenced in real time by the contestants.

I think I got the first episode right and made the right choices. ..I can't say that about all the future episodes...

Expect the unexpected and more importantly, call all and email all your friends in your email lists and buddy lists and have them watch The Benefactor on ABC on Monday nights. Then have them come back here and tell me what they think !