

TV Review: 'The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business' Offers Second Chance

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 20, 2011 - 12:37pm

- [Big Brother](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [CBS](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Phil Keoghan](#) [6]
- [Reality TV](#) [7]
- [Survivor](#) [8]
- [Television](#) [9]
- [The Amazing Race](#) [10]

CHICAGO – The Emmy Award-winning CBS hit “The Amazing Race” returns tonight, Feb. 20th, 2011, with a group of familiar faces, most of them red from embarrassment at the mistakes they made last time and looking to correct them on the new season, appropriately titled “Unfinished Business.” As with all all-star versions of reality competition shows, the familiarity is both a positive and a negative but this is still one of the best programs of its kind on the air, and now offered in HD for the first time.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Past all-star editions of “Survivor” and “Big Brother” have included contestants who won on their individual seasons. This twist, only allowing pairs who failed to cross the finish line another opportunity, provides a little bit of spark in that there’s no immediate frontrunner and some clear regrets. (The only show to ever beat “TAR” for the Emmy for Best Reality-Competition Program, “Top Chef,” happens to be doing the same thing with their currently-airing “Top Chef: All-Stars” also not including a single former winner.) Who will make the same mistakes the second time? Who learned from watching their drama unfold on Sunday nights? Who was lucky to make it as far as they did last time?



The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business
Photo credit: CBS

Who made the cut? In order of the last time you saw them:

Season 17: Gary and Mallory, father and daughter who came in 6th place after going in circles in Oman.

Season 16: Cowboys Jet and Cord, brothers who came in 2nd place after falling behind to another pair of brothers, Dan and Jordan, in the final hours.





The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business
Photo credit: CBS

Season 15: Herb and Nate, Harlem Globetrotters who came in 4th place after being unable to finish a complex Roadblock and taking a four-hour penalty that pushed them out of the top three; Zev and Justin, best friends who seemed to be frontrunners until they lost their passports and couldn't recover in time, finishing 9th.

Season 14: LaKisha and Jennifer, sisters who came in 4th place by only minutes after they needed to stop to use the restroom in China; Amanda and Kris, an engaged couple who came in 8th place after being unexpectedly u-turned by Margie and Luke, who, of course, also return; Jaime and Cara, former NFL cheerleaders who came in 2nd place after being unlucky enough to have the wrong taxi driver in the final moments of their race; Margie and Luke, mother and son who came in 3rd place after playing one of the most aggressive races in the show's history; Mike and Mel, father and son who came in 6th place after falling victim to the death of many race contestants — an incompetent cab driver.

Season 12: Ron and Christina, father and daughter who came in 2nd place after failing to communicate effectively for almost the entirety of their time on the race; Kent and Vyxsin, couple who came in 5th place after falling apart in Italy.

I chose to break it down this way to point the odd casting decisions made this year in that five out of the six teams come from the same season and none older than season twelve. "The Amazing Race" did an all-star edition already that brought in favorites from the early seasons, but it's hard to believe that there weren't a couple teams who didn't make that cut who might have been interesting on this edition as well.



The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business
Photo credit: CBS

Ultimately, "The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business" feels a bit too much like a repeat, not only because we've seen ten of these people compete against each other already, but because we've seen all of them so recently. Perhaps they noticed what bringing Russell back did for the recent all-star edition of "Survivor," but I would have liked a more-extensive selection of contestants from the last 17 seasons instead of a handful from the last five. A couple choices are inspired (Mike & Mel, Zev & Justin, Herb & Nate) but others are downright arbitrary — does ANYONE remember 9th place Amanda & Kris? Do we really want to spend more time with Ron? Margie? Even the cowboys seem to have lost some of their power to entertain.

Having said that, "The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business" is still incredibly well-made. The program wastes no time, getting the teams into a challenging situation immediately, presenting travel problems shortly thereafter, and ending up in Australia, which is shot in a sun-kissed way

that makes it look like one of the most beautiful places on Earth. The editing and production of this show is still well above-par, keeping the pace moving swiftly while also never allowing the viewer to lose track of what's going on. I'm always impressed by the editing of the final scenes as the producers try to keep viewers guessing as to just how close the racers are to one another.

"The Amazing Race" has been a solid reality show for years now, delivering varying degrees of quality entertainment for 18 editions. It doesn't have that spark that it once did and I think this edition feels a bit too desperately like an attempt to reignite it, but it's also too well-done to completely dismiss. I have a feeling we'll be watching the "Race" for years to come and, when fans rank the seasons in terms of quality, this one should end up about where most of its contestants did last time — somewhere in the middle.

"The Amazing Race: Unfinished Business" premieres on CBS on February 20th, 2011 at 7pm CST.



[11]

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