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Campaign '88

Bush starts talking like a winner as Dole's 'big event' fizzles

By Thomas Hardy and Mitchell Locin
Chicago Tribune

GALESBURG, Ill.—Sen. Bob Dole, his presidential campaign on the precipice, staged his own television show Saturday night in a last-ditch attempt to take votes away from Vice President George Bush before Tuesday's primary.

Dole drew comparisons Saturday between himself and two powerful Republican presidents with Illinois backgrounds—Abraham Lincoln and Ronald Reagan—but the telecast was vexed by technological problems that sometimes overshadowed its message.

Meanwhile, Bush predicted for the first time Saturday that he will win the Illinois primary—and effectively cinch his party's presidential nomination.

Buoyed by a foot-stomping, hooting and hollering campaign rally attended by about 1,500 supporters in the gymnasium of the McHenry Community College in Crystal Lake, the vice president ridiculed pundits inside the Washington beltway, many of whom counted Bush out after his loss in Iowa.

"The pundits, the inside-the-

beltway crowd, didn't give any consideration to the people, the people that are willing to come to rallies, the people who are willing to get on the phone and get the vote out," said Bush.

"So we are going to win on Tuesday because we have the people with us."

Both Dole and Bush were on the campus of Knox College in Galesburg Saturday night, but they were careful not to cross each other's paths.

Dole, who had called for Bush to join him in a free-wheeling debate at the college, instead appeared live on WGN-TV (Channel 9). Standing before a portrait of Lincoln, the senator said: "He worked hard, he studied, he was raised in poverty, and on his way to the presidency he felt defeat and victory."

Dole also told of his support in the Senate for Reagan's programs.

"I know I'm the underdog in this race," Dole said, "but the issues are more important than the odds." He ticked off his views on a host of issues, from the federal deficit to the drug problem. Addressing the issues is something he says Bush—who enjoys wide support for his links to Reagan—hasn't done.



Bush Dole

Dole's 30-minute program suffered from spotty production quality and a momentary power failure that resulted in a loss of the video portion midway through the show. Plus, it aired at 6:30 p.m., up against the immensely popular "Wheel of Fortune" on another station.

The telecast was Dole's own spin of the wheel, as he pinned his hopes on what he called "a big event" in an effort to convince voters that they shouldn't assure Bush of the nomination Tuesday without demanding a hearing from the two men on the issues.

Bush had avoided Dole's demands

for a two-man forum, so the senator decided to come alone to Knox College, site of a Lincoln-Douglas debate 130 years ago.

"It just seems to me we should have had a debate," the senator said, referring to the fact that Bush was to appear not more than 100 yards away to address a Knox County Republican Party dinner.

But Dole's "great debate" nearly became a great debacle. During the program, which his campaign has paid to rebroadcast in Downstate markets Sunday, Dole experienced a momentary video glitch in which the picture froze and programmers were forced to punch up a 14-minute biographical video of the senator.

Viewers thus missed a speech by Dole's wife, former Transportation Secretary Elizabeth Dole, in which she highlighted the senator's humble Midwestern roots, his accomplishments in Congress and the endorsements of Reagan administration cabinet members and advisers.

When asked why such a crucial broadcast so close to the election had not been taped, campaign chairman Bill Brock said: "Because Bob thought it was better to be real.

You know this can happen. You take that risk."

Advisers disagreed on whether Dole should have used the program to ridicule or confront the reticent Bush; a cautious tack won out.

"There was no use spending any time on George Bush. We have made that point," Brock said.

Since his big sweep on Super Tuesday, Bush has been ignoring the opposition as he sets about trying to unify the party by talking in broader themes. He attended a fundraiser at the college and a Lincoln's Day dinner, but he made no mention of Dole.

Earlier in the day, campaigning in friendly territory in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, Bush praised the economic recovery under Reagan, a theme more appropriate for a general election campaign than an intraparty fight.

At a breakfast for the Barrington Area Chamber of Commerce at a Palatine restaurant, Bush said the "Reagan revolution" has brought prosperity and growth to many suburban areas.

"The liberal myth-makers would have you believe that only the rich

have prospered," said Bush. "That's absolute nonsense. We've created more than 15 1/2 million new jobs" since the recovery began at the end of 1982. He said nearly two-thirds of the new jobs are in skilled occupations.

"So don't buy that baloney also that those jobs are bad jobs, everybody flipping hamburgers at McDonald's," he said.

Having started his political career as a precinct worker in Houston, Bush returned to working the phones during a stop at his Libertyville campaign office. He also took part in a St. Patrick's Day parade in Rockford on Saturday afternoon.

His defense of the economic recovery may be a tougher sell Sunday night, when Bush is scheduled to appear at a rally in Chicago's 10th Ward to appeal to the city's newest Republicans, including former Ald. Edward Vrdolyak, a GOP candidate for clerk of the Cook County Circuit Court.

The blue-collar workers in the 10th Ward have been devastated by factory closings, especially the demise of Wisconsin Steel.

Tribune correspondent Dorothy Collin contributed to this report.

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Campaign '88

'On Wisconsin' for Dole

I'll stay in the race after Illinois primary, senator says

By Dorothy Collin

Sen. Bob Dole, whose presidential campaign has been hovering on the brink of extinction, said Sunday that he would not pull out of the Republican race even if he loses the Illinois primary on Tuesday.

"Our new theme song is 'On Wisconsin,'" the Kansas Republican said on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," referring to the April 5 Wisconsin primary.

Later, he told reporters: "Competition is good, whether in trade or politics. There's going to be a better day."

Vice President George Bush holds a huge lead over Dole in Illinois, according to polls, and a win here could add even more delegates to Bush's growing collection.

But Dole praised his delegate states and said he could win his share of delegates and still lose the "beauty contest" part of the primary.

That possibility, and the upcoming pause in the primary marathon, seems to have caused Dole to back away from talk about "reassessing" his candidacy if he loses Illinois.

Instead, he put on a "game face" of determination and confidence as he campaigned in Chicago two days before the primary.

At the Seminary restaurant at Fullerton and Lincoln Avenues on Chicago's North Side, Dole visited

with customers eating Sunday lunch/brunch and several told him to "hang in there."

The Seminary is a noted neighborhood hangout for De Paul University coaches, politicians, cops, lakeshore liberals and other assorted Chicagoans. The senator, who relishes personal campaigning and sometimes looks like he is running for sheriff instead of president, seemed right at home.

Crowded around the table with the Senate minority leader was a group that included Elizabeth Dole, his wife and former secretary of transportation; Alexander Haig, the former secretary of state; and Ron Gidwitz, head of Helene Curtis and, more importantly, perhaps the 43rd Ward GOP committeeman.

Also at the Seminary was Cook County Circuit Judge Frank Petrone, who shared a hospital room with Dole in Battle Creek, Mich., after World War II. Both men had been severely wounded while serving with the 10th Mountain Division.

"Here's a kid who was paralyzed and kept saying, 'I'll be okay, I'll be okay,'" Petrone said. "If he could overcome that, he can overcome anything."

Petrone, a Democrat, said he planned to take a Republican ballot Tuesday so he could vote for Dole.

The senator was in a chipper

mood despite the technical glitches that marred the live telecast Saturday night, that he hoped would break Bush's momentum.

He said a taped, technically improved version of the program would be shown Downstate on Sunday and Monday and perhaps in Chicago on Monday.

The candidate seemed determined to fight on, partly because he finds it hard to believe voters won't reconsider Bush's candidacy and conclude that Dole would be a better, stronger nominee.

"I have some obligation not to look ridiculous but to stay in this race and let the American people step back and take a look and then I believe they will make the judgment that Bob Dole is the strongest candidate," Dole said.

After Illinois, the frantic pace of the presidential race slows down for a few weeks, giving Dole and his strategists time to reconnoiter. It also gives them time for something to happen that might adversely affect Bush.

Last week, Dole said that a poor finish on Tuesday would cause him to reassess his campaign.

But the senator hinted then that he would not pull out of the race for another two or three weeks even if he lost Illinois. "Other things can happen in the interim," he said. "Circumstances can change in this



Sen. Bob Dole chats with World War II Army nurse Shirley Rohweder and Darryl Urchel (left), a Vietnam War veteran, Sunday at Hines Veterans Hospital near Maywood.

business."

Among those circumstances could be fallout from indictments in the Iran-contra affair that could bring out new information about Bush's role. Also, there could be revelations about Panama's military leader, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, in Senate hearings.

In the past, Dole has questioned whether Bush, as head of the CIA under President Gerald Ford, had

any knowledge of Noriega's activities. Noriega may have been on the CIA's payroll at that point.

Asked if he anticipated anything coming out of the hearings that might damage the vice president, Dole just said there were "rumors" around Capitol Hill.

Though Dole chose not to go after Bush in his telecast Saturday, the senator took a few verbal shots at the vice president on Sunday.

Asked why Bush was doing so well, Dole responded: "He's not doing anything. He's not raising the issues. He's letting Ronald Reagan be a surrogate for him in a silent way."

The fact that Bush benefits from the Reagan record especially grates on Dole. "I did the work in the Senate, somehow Bush gets the credit," Dole said. "Life isn't fair, as someone said."

As opponents slip, the George Bush inevitability scenario gains momentum

Can Bob Dole make a comeback?

Bob Dole has not gotten a lot of good news lately. In every poll, George Bush has commanding leads, and he has even managed to close the gap on the issue Senate Majority Leader Dole had hoped to make the centerpiece of his campaign—leadership. Worse still, Pat Robertson's invisible army—which the Dole forces had hoped would narrow Bush's margins—has eroded. A majority of born-again and evangelical GOP voters say they prefer the Vice President to the TV evangelist. At this point, says Republican strategist Haley Barbour, "Dole will have to pull a rabbit out of his hat." Even Bill Brock, Dole's embattled campaign manager, says all he wants out of Super Tuesday is "survival."

Dole will survive, but the question is where he goes from here. The next stop

is Illinois next Tuesday, where Bush has the support of key GOP leaders like Governor Jim Thompson and Representative Lynn Martin and where he plans a massive statewide media buy. Dole's Midwestern base will help him in the Southern farming districts, but Bush remains strong in heavily populated Chicago and its outlying suburbs.

"If Bush wins Illinois, it's all over," says Martin. "That means there's no place for Dole to make his comeback."

Martin may well be right. After Illinois, the battles move to Bush strongholds Puerto Rico and Connecticut, which is yet another of what the Bush staff calls his "pseudo home states." In New York, Bush has already sewn up 45 of the 102 delegates at stake in the state's April 19 primary simply because Dole didn't enter delegate slates in 23

of the 34 congressional districts. Pennsylvania is another Bush stronghold—leaving Dole with Wisconsin. "The calendar," says Bush political director Rich Bond, "works against Dole."

To come back, says Barbour, Dole must "go against Bush in an issue-specific way." But, he adds, "there is nothing policywise to really differentiate them." Indeed, the GOP front-runners are reduced to disagreeing on an issue that belongs to Democrat Richard Gephardt—the trade bill. Dole's only remaining weapon may be his razor-sharp tongue, and Dole does seem to have recovered from the nice-guy paralysis that hurt him in New Hampshire. He is on the attack—calling Bush a "Rockefeller Republican" and implying that he knew of Panamanian strong man Antonio Noriega's drug activities

while he was CIA director. In the end, however, it won't be personal or even political differences that decide this campaign, but organization.

Bush's advantage is clear: When his campaign plane takes off, he knows where it will land. By contrast, the Dole organization is almost nonexistent. In the weeks before Super Tuesday, Dole's handlers were embroiled in a bitter and public power struggle. Turnout at rallies has been embarrassingly low. Dole himself joked to reporters last week that he'd ask the pilot where the campaign plane was headed. It was disorganization that kept him from filing petitions in New York, even though the deadline came after his stunning Iowa victory. Meanwhile, the Bush army assembled an al-



most flawless patchwork of local organizations in the South, so that all that was left to do in the weeks after New Hampshire was react to the opposition. Dole has continued to pick up endorsements from senators and from for-

mer U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. But they do not provide the kind of in-state muscle that can physically turn out votes. The one real boost for Dole in a dismal week: Two polls showed that he would do better than Bush against almost any of the Democratic candidates in the general election. But even that may work against him. Claiming "I can win and my opponent can't" is an age-old ploy. Nelson Rockefeller used it against Richard Nixon in 1968. Gerald Ford used it against Ronald Reagan in 1976 and Gary Hart used it against Walter Mondale in 1984. It worked only for Ford. He won the nomination. But he lost the general election.

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