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Campaign '88

Bush has reason to dance; Dole faces grim music

Chicago Tribune

In a back room of the Rosemont Expo Center, Vice President George Bush's national campaign manager, Lee Atwater, was explaining how well his candidate had done Tuesday in Illinois.

Just as he said that Bush had won in "the heart of Sen. [Bob] Dole's political base," the blue convention curtain that surrounded the makeshift room began falling one stanchion at a time, like dominoes.

The metaphor to what was happening to the Dole campaign was obvious. Bush had just scored another impressive showing, and it was a night for his supporters to celebrate.

Or was it? Republicans were slow to gather in Rosemont for Bush's victory party, and one aide asked a television reporter to invite everyone down for the big celebration.

Bush's arrival time was pushed back, from shortly after 8 p.m. to maybe 8:15, 8:45 or 9.

Finally, at 9 p.m., Bush crossed the street from the Hyatt Regency O'Hare hotel to declare victory to a room that was half full. "Who said nice guys finish last?" he began, eliciting a roar of approval from the crowd. "This was a great and convincing victory in Illinois, in the Land of Lincoln."

Joseph Williams, 33, of Rosemont, was one of the few who arrived early, standing almost alone in the front of the gaily decorated hall shortly after the doors opened at 7 p.m.

He said he came early because, "I know Bush is going to win all the way, he's going to be the next president."

Bush's election night party was set up in the Rosemont Expo Center, closer to those suburban Republican voters than the traditional downtown Chicago location for such parties.

Bush, at first, didn't want to delay his appearance for the late-arriving Republicans or local TV stations, which did not plan to go on the air with the election night



Campaigning Sen. Albert Gore joins high school students from Sand Creek, Mich., in posing for a classmate with a camera Tuesday during a visit to the Capitol at Lansing.

specials until 9 p.m.

"He's anxious to get back [to Washington]," said Ed Murnane, Bush's Illinois co-manager. "He's meeting with [Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak] Shamir tomorrow."

But with room slowly filling, the time was pushed back.

Decked out in red, white and blue bunting, balloons and signs, the party room bounced to the music of jazz great Lionel Hampton.

But even the music had a political overtone to it. The relief band was led by State Rep. Samuel Panayotovich of Chicago, one of the new Republicans who left the Democratic Party along with former Ald. Ed Vrdolyak.

But with room slowly filling, the time was pushed back.

WASHINGTON—Tired and subdued, Sen. Bob Dole returned to the nation's capital Tuesday

Vice President George Bush by less than had been predicted.

"All this says is we continue to have a very strong candidacy and Bush has trouble building on momentum without anything to sustain it," Brock said.

Asked if Illinois was the recovery state that Dole had hoped it would be, Brock said: "Looks like it."

Although the numbers show the senator needs a miracle of some kind to stop Bush from getting the nomination, Dole said at campaign appearances Tuesday in Wisconsin and Connecticut that he would keep fighting.

"You don't give up," he told students at the University of Hartford. "You don't give up when you believe you're the best and strongest leader America can have. You don't give up."

Dole argued that voters should have a choice and not be stampeded by the surge of momentum that Bush got from "Super Tuesday." He is pinning his last hopes on voters reconsidering the candidates when they realize that Bush is likely to be the nominee.

But at a news conference in Madison, Wis., Dole acknowledged that "we need to win one fairly soon."

The senator said he planned to return to the Senate Wednesday, take a few days to talk to colleagues, then perhaps spend some time in the Florida sun before continuing his campaign.

Dole, who usually stops to banter with reporters, only had a few crisp words to say before climbing in a car and heading for home with his wife, Elizabeth, and their dog, Leader.

He also somewhat testily referred to recent reports that his advisers were telling him he should quit the race.

"I'll listen to my friends, but I believe the candidate has to make the choice," the senator said. "I don't see any need to rush to

judgment."

Dorothy Collin

BOSTON—Saying "I don't get disappointed," Gov. Michael Dukakis on Tuesday night called his third-place Illinois showing "respectable" given the competition of two home-state opponents.

"I was running against two citizens of Illinois who had strong bases and a great deal of support from people who know them," Dukakis said.

"We understand that I could have detoured around Illinois, but I think that's the wrong policy. I think that's not the kind of campaign that wins support, wins respect, builds a foundation for the fall, that gives people an opportunity to see you in action early on."

But despite Dukakis' upbeat comments, it is clear that his defeat in Illinois deals a blow to the notion of inevitability that he has been trying to build around his candidacy.

Dukakis spent \$250,000 in television commercials and six days of his time campaigning. Yet, he ended up just where he had started a week ago—a distant third—and with possibly only a handful of delegates, if that many.

"The favorite sons won the home game, and those circumstances won't repeat themselves," said Leslie Dach, communications director for Dukakis, adding, "We did better than the other folks from beyond the border."

"I knew it was an uphill race from the beginning," the governor said. "Our finish was a respectable one under the circumstances. We're going to go on from here. It establishes this candidacy that continues to do well across the board. We're not going to win them all. We'll take a second or a third from time to time. In this campaign, that's working hard, building a base."

Philip Lents

On this page are unofficial, and sometimes incomplete, results of the March 15 Illinois primary elections. A box marked [X] indicates an apparent winner; a bullet [•] indicates an incumbent.

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Now we can watch the grass grow

So much for Stupor Tuesday.

The frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, finished third. The Republican leader, George Bush, finished first. And neither's campaign was affected one iota.

The two underdogs endorsed by The Tribune in hopes of enlivening the campaign did not enliven. Democrat Albert Gore and Republican Robert Dole are even further under the dog than they were a week ago. The lone significance may be that Sen. Dole is now so far under that his campaign won't see another Tuesday, super, stupor or even just regular.

However impressive Sen. Paul Simon's first-place finish is ultimately interpreted to be, he is no closer to the White House than he was when he began it all in Iowa. He predictably has taken heart again, but then he takes heart easily.

Unfortunately, he will have to beat Gov. Dukakis a lot of other places before the rest of us take heart with him.

If Illinois voters sent any message to the nation Tuesday it was that with the exception of Jesse Jackson, they found all the candidates and their campaigns

just as unexciting as everyone else has. Anyone looking forward to a Bush-Dukakis race in the fall is probably also ecstatic with anticipation of more snow in April and the next Chicago winter.

The Illinois primary election was for the most part passionless, hardly the stuff of which our legends are made. It was hard enough to get anybody to vote even once, much less risking indictment with the usual shenanigans.

Except for a few snarls from Sen. Dole, true election fever was limited to the outpouring of minority hope for Rev. Jackson and the adulation for Ronald Reagan piled on the shoulders of Vice President Bush by silk-stocking Republicans.

The Reagan worship and the Jackson rainbow will stretch all the way to the conventions, even if the Dole snarls do not. But for most voters, the excitement of the presidential election process has been winnowed along with most of the candidates.

Will Paul Simon or Al Gore stick around long enough to help Jesse Jackson force Mike Dukakis into a convention deal? Will George Bush have anyone other than a firebreathing rightwinger for a running mate? Stay tuned, as they say on television, for details and film at 10—if you're still awake.

2 sides of Bob Dole struggle over decision to stay in race

By Dorothy Collin

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON—Sen. Bob Dole is a proud and complex man—a fierce, almost romantic competitor and the ultimate pragmatist.

This week, as the Senate minority leader ponders whether to continue his pursuit of the Republican presidential nomination, Dole the competitor and Dole the pragmatist seem to be at war.

One day, Dole says he will not give up, even though Vice President George Bush is on a winning streak and has a huge lead in delegates.

The next day, Dole says he is a "mature" politician who knows how to count and does not plan to "extend" the GOP contest.

One hour, the senator is singing "On Wisconsin," and talking about that state's April 5 primary. The next hour, he has told one of his favorite aides to leave his campaign staff and return to the Senate staff.

Dole returned to the Senate floor Wednesday after a frantic five weeks in which, early on, the GOP nomination was within his grasp. Then he saw his dream drift away.

As he met with colleagues and advisers about his future, indictments in the Iran-contra affair were being announced a few blocks away, an event Dole and his supporters hope could somehow change the GOP race.

They theorize that the issue may become hot in the news media again and Bush might be questioned on what he did or did not know or do. Or they speculate that some disclosure may harm Bush.

A group of Dole's Senate backers met Wednesday afternoon and agreed that it would be "positive" for Dole to stay in the race, but "realistic" for him to run a more low-key campaign, just enough to be an "alternative" according to Sen. Nancy Kassebaum, Dole's GOP colleague from Kansas.

But Dole himself has said a politician can't plan a campaign on what might or might not happen to an opponent.

So it is the senator, with the advice and consent of his wife, Elizabeth, who is going to have to decide how long he wants to pursue his presidential quest.

Dole fell behind because of a chaotic, inexperienced and indecisive campaign organization, the lack of a clear message that would inspire voters, and Bush's connection to President Reagan.

The organizational problems occurred partly because Dole has trouble delegating authority. In the Senate, he has some good staffers, but none of them could be considered in any way a peer. When an important decision is made, it is made by Dole.

In a national political campaign, most experienced strategists agree, the candidate has to let others make many logistical and strategic decisions while he concentrates on being a candidate.

Dole, who knew he was often criticized for not delegating authority, finally let someone else

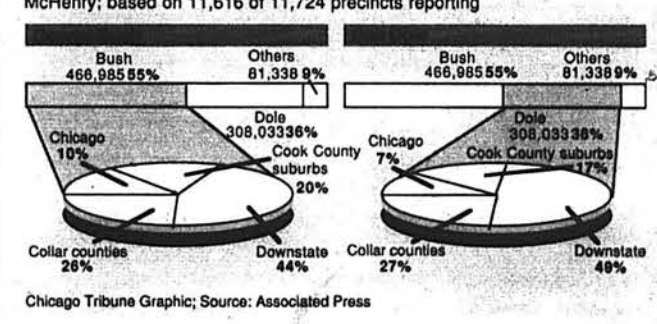


Bob Dole on Wednesday displays a letter from a 7-year-old in Los Angeles who wrote, "I hope you don't let Mr. Bush upset you."

Where the votes came from

Republicans

Percentage of each candidate's Illinois Primary vote from Chicago, suburban Cook County, Downstate, and collar counties of Du Page, Lake, Will, Kane, McHenry; based on 11,616 of 11,724 precincts reporting



Chicago Tribune Graphic; Source: Associated Press

run things, and when he did, his worst nightmares about giving up control came true.

In New Hampshire, in the week after Dole's big win in the Iowa caucuses, the senator deferred to campaign officials such as chairman Bill Brock and pollster Richard Wirthlin, who told him he was going to win the New Hampshire primary.

The top officials became cautious and sat on their lead, despite a barrage of television ads attacking Dole as being in favor of a tax increase, a subject of considerable passion in anti-tax New Hampshire.

When several of Dole's Senate colleagues suggested that the campaign should retaliate or at least clear the record, their ideas were ignored or no one would make a decision, according to one of the senators. Dole lost New Hampshire to Bush.

There also was the problem of not having a clear message. Dole has been telling voters that he is a

strong leader and "can make a difference." But just how he would make a difference in voters' lives really has not been spelled out in a way that inspires—or at least inspires votes.

Sometimes there is a glimmer, especially when the candidate talks of his own background as a poor boy and his successful battle to overcome war wounds and then ties his story to the hopes of others.

But so far it has not come together enough to give voters a reason to choose Dole over Bush, who has one overwhelming advantage: Reagan.

Republicans love Reagan and their loyalty to him seems to overcome arguments, no matter how logical, that Dole is a better candidate than Bush.

As Dole pondered his future, the ways in the Capitol were saying: "Ronald Reagan is the first President to run for a third term since Franklin Roosevelt."