



Tell the Truth! 2004

Media Reality ✓ Check

Press Contact:
Tim Scheiderer
(703) 683-5004
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Expert Documentation of the Latest Liberal Media Bias ✪ **Wednesday, October 6, 2004**

Only CBS News Claims Edwards Won the Debate; CBS Reporter Says Cheney's Words "Did Not Take"

Scolding "Gratuitously Mean" Dick Cheney

ABC's Peter Jennings scoffed at his own network's poll showing more voters believed Vice President Cheney won last night's debate, calling the poll a "who won thing" and warning viewers that ABC's pollsters may have over-sampled Republicans. Pundits on MSNBC and the Fox News Channel credited Cheney with the stronger showing, with only CBS presenting Democrat John Edwards as the outright winner:

■ **Typical CBS.** CBS's survey of "uncommitted" voters dwindled to just 178 people, most of whom came into the debate with an animus against the Vice President, reporter Anthony Mason admitted: "Going into tonight's debate, nearly 60 percent of the uncommitted voters we surveyed said they did not personally like him. When asked how they'd feel if Cheney became President, 24 percent said 'scared,' only two percent said 'excited.'" But CBS used these voters to claim a 42 to 29 percent victory for John Edwards.

■ **Cheney Failed.** CBS's Bob Schieffer, who will moderate next week's final presidential debate, argued that Cheney accomplished nothing. "The Vice President tonight had the unfortunate task of defending a war that does not appear to be going well," Schieffer insisted. "The arguments that Vice President Cheney was making tonight clearly did not take."

■ **Scolding the Tone.** CBS's John Roberts insisted the debate "got downright nasty there for a little while." ABC News Political Director Mark Halperin, appearing on PBS's *Charlie Rose*, called Cheney "gratuitously mean" when the Vice President chastised Edwards' weak Senate attendance

record. But *Newsweek's* Jon Meacham called Cheney "strong and serene," and MSNBC's Chris Matthews wondered if "the liberal press [will] admit that Cheney won?" (See box.)

■ **John, Meet Dick.** ABC's George Stephanopoulos spent much of *Nightline* trying to figure out if Cheney was right when he said he hadn't met Edwards before the debate, avoiding Cheney's larger point that Edwards was a Senate no-show: "We're told...they met at a national prayer breakfast a couple of years ago and they might also have met at the swearing in of Elizabeth Dole," Stephanopoulos told Cheney's daughter, Liz. He also raised the point with his former Clinton White House colleague Mike McCurry, now a Kerry media adviser.

Will the Liberal Media Admit Cheney Won?

MSNBC's Chris Matthews: "Will it be apparent enough to *The New York Times* to mention in the top of the fold tomorrow? Will the liberal press admit that Cheney won?"

Newsweek Managing Editor Jon Meacham: "That's a very good question. I think that the Vice President did very, very well. He turned in a strong and serene performance compared to Edwards, who I think seemed like Kerry Lite."

— **Exchange on MSNBC following the debate.**

■ **Woodruff's Wonderland.** CNN's Judy Woodruff looks to the media elite for objective analysis: "I've talked also to reporters, who, you know, one assumes they're coming at this from the center. In their opinion, this debate was close to a draw, and what they go on to say, though, is that if the Republicans, if Dick Cheney was hoping to put away John Edwards, by virtue of the Vice President's considerable experience, he didn't do that tonight."

■ **Beware the Media Spin.** On MSNBC's *Imus in the Morning*, *Newsweek's* Evan Thomas thought Thursday's Bush-Kerry debate "was pretty much of a tie, but I was quickly informed I was wrong and that Kerry had won." Let's see how they spin the VP debate in the days ahead.

— *Brent Baker and Rich Noyes*

Read the Media Research Center's complete analysis of the Vice Presidential debate at www.mrc.org.

To schedule an interview with an MRC spokesman, please contact Tim Scheiderer at (703) 683-5004