



Campaign 2000

Media Reality ✓ Check

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Stephanopoulos Swooned Over Gore; ABC Gore Reporter Praised Al, Bush Reporter Dumped on W.

ABC Wins in the Post-Debate Bias Contest

Overall, the media suggested last night's Bush-Gore debate was a wash, but ABC News won the post-debate contest in who would spin most baldly in Al Gore's direction last night.

Unpaid Shill. Four years ago, George Stephanopoulos was a paid staffer for Al Gore's election. The only difference last night was that he's now paid by ABC News. Just after the debate ended, he swooned, "Gore dominated the debate, Peter. You know, all year long he's been trailing Governor Bush on the issue of who's the strongest leader. Well, tonight Gore not only took up most of the time, most of the time was spent on the issues that he has the biggest advantage on, most particularly prescription drugs....It was even the way that he would interrupt Jim Lehrer and say, 'Listen, I want one more word.' He looked like he was dominating, and then again, the issues that the time was spent on — prescription drugs, education, Social Security, even the RU-486 and abortion issue. All of those favor Gore."

Later on *Nightline*, Stephanopoulos was still floating on air: "I really think if you look at the totality of the questions, there wasn't a single issue, with perhaps the exception of the energy question, where Gore lost on points over the course of the 90 minutes. He was strong, he was detailed, he was specific, and he posed questions to Bush that Bush left on the table. My guess is also on the issue of foreign policy, Bush was quite shaky, particularly when he was talking about military readiness, when he was talking about the situation in Serbia right now. Gore actually corrected him. Yes, Gore was too much of a know-it-all, a little too arrogant, but I think that people in the end were looking at the substance and the specifics, and on that, Gore won." (Universal shill David Gergen disagreed.)

Beat Reporter Bias. ABC Gore beat reporter Terry Moran also praised Gore: "What I heard is Al Gore doing what he does best, which is focusing on these specific issues. I

suppose what I was a little bit surprised at was the way he managed time after time to control every single question, it seemed like, to get to what he wanted to say.... He does better over a longer course of time, does better with voters

over the course of an hour than over the course of 15 minutes. His strengths come out, his mastery of the issues, how much he's thought about these things." (Moran conceded Gore "clicked into the overconfident mode a little

bit.")

By contrast, ABC Bush reporter Dean Reynolds knocked Bush: "I did not hear a great deal that was different from the standard stump speech that the Governor gives day in and day out, and that speech runs about 10 to 15 minutes long, and I don't think he really had enough material from that speech to cover a 90-minute debate."

Character "Weakness." The biggest surprise of the post-debate spin segments was NBC's Tom Brokaw putting a question from the right to both Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman, including a note to Lieberman about the Democrats' fundraising record, and how Clinton and Gore had eight years to pass to health reforms. But most TV reporters did not like Bush on Gore's fundraising ethics.

CBS's Bob Schieffer called it Bush's "weakest moment." CNN's Jeff Greenfield suggested that "Bush might want to have some words back" when he suggested Gore has no campaign-reform credibility. Dan Rather asked both Cheney and Lieberman what Bush was trying to achieve with his "strongest attack." They did not find it significant that Gore didn't answer Bush's charges. — *Tim Graham*

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L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Tim Graham, Editors; Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmoth, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. For the most complete media bias analysis, see the *CyberAlert* at www.mrc.org