

WOBBLY LEGS IN THE THIRD

Jim Carlson

Once upon a time in a land that now seems far, far away, the delineation between Democrats and Republicans was as clear as the fabric in Paris Hilton's dress. Democrats served as the diligent and compelling voice of the working class, the downtrodden and disenfranchised. Republicans proudly championed the cause of rich white men and ubiquitous corporations. The parties' respective identities were clear, and it was easy to pick one team over another when their uniforms had as much in common as Keith Olbermann does with Bill O'Reilly.

Now, however, that all appears to have changed. Now, the line between these two political powerhouses has become as gray as the pall of George Bush's face after learning there were no weapons of mass destruction. Democrats and Republicans now appear to have far more in common than not. Even with close attention paid, it's increasingly difficult to tell who is the champion of what, who is the advocate for whom. Baffling!

This evolution, or maybe better stated, mutation of our major political parties, however, probably comes as no surprise to the ashen-faced political gym rats who regard themselves as Washington insiders. With fewer hobbies than a pig has wings, these political junkies spend their entire lives analyzing the un-interpretable, American politics. They make complete 'sense' of the American political process, and they will be the first to tell you why this political hermaphroditism has happened – polls.

Polls, focus groups, and other highly technical and unscientific measures of the nation's electorate have become progressively more influential in the lives and minds of the American politician. They carefully read, listen, and watch all the numbers before making any decision, from turning off the lights in their offices to dropping bombs on Iran.

Since the candidates are all watching the same numbers, however, they all tend to arrive at pretty much the same place, in the middle. Candidates now believe that Election Day success requires the winner to get as close as possible to the center without burning one's hand on it.

This phenomenon has made it profoundly perplexing for the nation's electorate, leaving us with little discernable differences from which to make a decision. With the candidates bunched together like vultures on road kill, we are left to make the same types of arbitrary and subjective decisions made by bettors at the race track. Pick a name, a look, or a style.

Horse track gamblers spend hours perusing the numbers, examining the pedigree, and assessing the jockey, only to pick a winner based only on the name...

"I'll take Wobbly Legs in the third!"

Or from the betting guide description written by some high school dropout with a cigarette in one hand and a losing ticket in the other...

"Has four legs, could use four more"

Since this decision-making process has well served the Sport of Kings for many years, it would seem logical that such an approach might work at the nation's polling places. Imagine back on Election Day 2004, walking into the polling place and getting your first glance at the ballot.

- John Kerry
Purple Hearts
Shot is as long as his prenup with Teresa Heinz
- George Bush
Scarecrow
Questionable pedigree - has one brain, could use one more

With Election Day 2008 creeping up on us faster than Mel Gibson's fall from grace, THAT'S ALL FOR NOW shall offer a new service to its readers, at no additional cost. To make your presidential decision easy and early, the 2008 betting guide is now available.

- Hillary Clinton
Monica's Nemesis
Front runner but is Bill in the saddle
- Barack Obama
Obamarama
Best Illinois bet since Adlai Stevenson
- Al Gore
Inconvenient Rock Star
May not fit in the gate
- John Edwards
Carolina Pearls
Bill Clinton Wannabe needs more than a smile to pull upset
- Alan Keyes
WacKeys
Starts from the outside and stays there
- Joe Biden
Twenty Year Itch
Last ran in 1988. Will show better than WacKeys
- Rudy Giuliani
Rudy Gee
Strong contender who runs good in the mud
- John McCain
Clutch Cargo
Like Purple Hearts, would run better on Botox

And out of the gate they come. It's Monica's Nemesis by a head, followed by Rudy Gee and Obamarama. Closing are Carolina Pearls, Twenty Year Itch and Clutch Cargo all bunched together. And pulling up the rear is WacKeys, with Inconvenient Rock Star still at the post.

Bet early, bet often.

That's all for now!

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