

7 Things to Expect at Monday Night's Debate

If you're watching tonight's first presidential debate between Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and his Democratic counterpart, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, you will be far from alone.

The broadcast, which will air at 9 p.m. EDT on CNN, will also be streaming on the cable network's website, , and its CNNgo app for mobile devices. More than 100 million viewers are expected to watch—putting it in the same league as last year's Super Bowl football game.

The current record for largest debate audience is Oct. 28, 1980, debate between Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter, which garnered an audience of 80.6 million viewers. The next largest debate audience was in 1992 when George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Ross Perot sparred on television.

Some will be watching to be better informed. Others will be watching, hoping for one or both of the candidates to have a “moment”—good or bad—that completely redefines the political landscape of the 2016 elections.

Still others are the type who go out of their way to watch a demolition derby.

Regardless, they will see a 90-minute debate moderated by NBC's Lester Holt. It will focus on the direction of the country, the economy, national security and foreign policy.

Here are seven things to be looking for during tonight's debate:

1. Format

The debate will be broken down into six segments. Each segment

will feature a question from Holt directed to one of the candidates, who will have two minutes to respond. His or her opponent will then have two minutes of rebuttal. The remaining 10 minutes will feature an open debate and discussion of the central topic.

Hillary Clinton will get the first question of the night.

2. Rules

Unlike the debates held during the primary process, which were controlled by each political party, every aspect of this debate—down to the tiniest detail—is controlled by the rules handed down by the Commission on Presidential Debates. Some of the decisions are arbitrary: Coin tosses decided which side of the stage the candidates are on and who gets the first question.

Others require judgment decisions and negotiations between the two campaigns. For instance, Clinton—who stands just 5 feet 4 inches tall—asked for a step stool to prevent her from being dwarfed by the 6-foot-3-inch Trump.

Although that request was denied, a special podium has been built to try to accommodate the significant height difference between the two.

3. Hillary's Health

Clinton canceled a number of public events in the week following her Sept. 11 pneumonia diagnosis and tonight's debate, prompting additional concerns about her overall health. Those were further intensified after a pool reporter captured video of Clinton carefully walking out of New York City daycare center while wearing what appeared to be a heavy winter coat—on a 70-degree day.

One prominent physician, Dr. Ted Noel, who has publicly stated he believes there is ample video evidence that Clinton is

suffering from Parkinson's Disease, has said he will be watching the debate closely for more signs. If she were to have another "medical episode" during the debate, there are no plans for commercial breaks during the debate.

4. No Pinocchios for You

Under the rules of the debate—and unlike in the previous debates during the primary races—Holt will not be allowed to "fact check" either of the candidates' statements. This had been a frustration for many viewers of past debates, particularly when the "fact checking" turned out to just be flat-out wrong.

Instead, it will be up to the candidates to police themselves, which is perhaps why the liberal mainstream media has bombarded the Trump campaign with accusations he has repeatedly lied or "made things up" on the campaign trail. Those attacks were planted by the Clinton campaign—it will be interesting to see how Trump counters those attacks tonight.

5. The Off-Stage Circus

The Clinton campaign invited billionaire Mark Cuban—who has relentlessly bashed Trump for months on Twitter and in interviews—to sit in the front row of the audience. The expectation was likely to goad Trump into a feisty reaction.

Instead, and in true "Trump" fashion, her opponent suggested he might give a seat right next to Cuban to Gennifer Flowers, with whom President Bill Clinton has admitted he had an extramarital affair. Both camps are trying to get under each other's skin before the debate even begins, and it's likely that will spill over to tonight.

6. The Wild Card

Invariably, in the polarized world in which we find ourselves, tonight's debate will often resemble a two-on-one battle. What

kind of two-on-one will depend entirely upon the “wild card”: moderator Lester Holt.

Both candidates have questioned whether or not he can be impartial, and Trump’s claim that he would be facing two Democrats on the stage tonight forced Holt to admit a surprising fact: He’s a registered Republican. And, it wouldn’t be outside the realm of possibility for Trump and Clinton to team up against the moderator from time to time.

7. The Winner Will Be

Regardless of who wins tonight, both sides will attempt to claim victory in the hopes of swaying a few well-placed media types to agree with them. Winning the first debate has become a critical piece to winning the White House every four years.

The two campaigns will likely have their own armies of surrogates to put out their respective “spin” on the evening’s events.