

Hillary Clinton's Huge South Carolina Win Sets the Stage for 'Super Tuesday I'

Riding high after a landslide victory in Saturday's South Carolina primary, Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton has set sights on a possible face-off in the Nov. 8 presidential election with Donald Trump, the favorite for the Republican nomination.

Without mentioning Trump's name, the former secretary of state made it clear on Saturday evening she was already thinking about taking on the billionaire businessman, whose recent string of victories made him the favorite to be the Republican nominee for the White House race.

Clinton shot down Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," and his plans to build a wall on the border.

"Despite what you hear, we don't need to make America great again. America has never stopped being great," she told supporters in her victory speech in South Carolina, pausing for applause then adding, "but we do need to make America whole again."

"Instead of building walls, we need to be tearing down barriers," said Clinton, who would be the United States' first woman president.

Clinton said she was not taking anything for granted after crushing Democratic rival Bernie Sanders on Saturday by 48 percentage points, likely setting herself up for a good "Super Tuesday" night on March 1, a key date in the nomination battle.

But if Clinton and Trump win big on Tuesday as opinion polls

suggest, the chance of a general election matchup between them increases, adding another twist to a presidential campaign that has defied convention as U.S. voters vent frustration over economic uncertainty, illegal immigration and national security threats.

A Trump-Clinton election would embody the outsider-versus-establishment battle in American politics. Trump has never been elected to public office, while the former first lady has been a player in Washington for decades.

South Carolina Democratic voter Teri Faust, 59, said Clinton would be better able to take on Trump than Sanders, a U.S. senator from Vermont.

“Bernie wouldn’t stand a chance against him. Hillary is strong,” said Faust, who met Clinton when she came to her church two years ago and again on Clinton’s first campaign trip to the state when she held a roundtable for minority women business owners.

Sanders Doubts

South Carolina was Clinton’s third victory in the first four Democratic contests, raising more questions about whether Sanders, a democratic socialist, will be able to expand his support beyond his base of predominantly white liberals.

Exit polls showed Clinton winning big in the state with almost every constituency. She won nine of every 10 black voters, as well as women, men, urban, suburban, rural, very liberal and conservative voters. Sanders was ahead among voters between ages 18 and 29, and among white men.

When asked which candidate they thought “can win in November,” an overwhelming 79 percent said Clinton, with only 21 percent putting their faith in Sanders to defeat the eventual Republican nominee.

Sanders, who has energized the party's liberal wing and successfully courted many of the party's youth, on Sunday acknowledged he had been "decimated" by Clinton in South Carolina. He set his sights on March 1, where a win in a key state is crucial to keeping his hopes alive.

"I think we're going to do well on Super Tuesday, we're going to do well in many states after that and we look forward to those state-by-state struggles," he said in an interview on NBC News's "Meet the Press."

But Sanders needs to have his breakout moment sooner rather than later, warned longtime Democratic activist Phil Noble, who said that Sanders' momentum in South Carolina "fell off the table" after Clinton's solid victory in Nevada on Feb. 20.

"He's got to pull off a surprise against Clinton soon or he won't have time to recover," he said.

(Additional reporting by: Alana Wise in Washington, Luciana Lopez in New York, Emily Stephenson in Texas; Editing by Alistair Bell, Mary Milliken and Jonathan Oatis)

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