

In the End, Republicans Will Finally Unite

As we move through the primary campaign season, observers are noting with increased frequency how the candidates have gotten so nasty towards each other that it might be impossible for Republicans and conservatives to come together when the time is ripe to deal with the greater issue – defeating Hillary Clinton and the Democrats in November.

Donald Trump and Ted Cruz have been particularly vitriolic towards each other of late, leaving some wondering whether those wounds will turn to scars that can't and won't be removed.

W. James Antle III of the *Washington Examiner* writes, “While Cruz once seemed best positioned to keep Trump and his supporters in the fold – that was certainly his initial strategy – the contest between them has gotten increasingly nasty. That's more Trump's fault than Cruz's, but it doesn't help anyone unite the party in the end.

“‘Unity’ will be the buzzword as Republicans contemplate their presidential ticket. Right now, it's in short supply.”

The “unity” question is an interesting one and certainly relevant at this stage of the race. The bitterness that's been going back-and-forth for several months is definitely taking its toll on both Cruz and Trump as national surveys indicate both of their “unfavorable” ratings have gone up significantly.

This is a serious problem, but not one that can't be fixed. We must remember that we're still in the heat of the primary race and therefore there haven't been many attempts at healing the rifts as of yet.

Those will come, but it will take time. Luckily, I think there're more than enough days and weeks left to allow for recovery.

I liken all the nastiness to the "football training camp" mentality of a campaign. Harkening back to my high school football days, our team trained pretty intensely for about a month prior to the start of the season. During those two-a-day practices, we were basically only beating on each other while running our own plays.

In this scenario, the guy across from you might be your teammate and on your side in the big picture, but when it's a hundred degrees outside and he just stepped on your leg for about the twentieth time in a week, he becomes the enemy pretty quickly.

Why else are there so many fights between teammates during training camp?

Once the season starts, however, the opposing teams become the focus during practice instead of your teammates. There are still a lot of bruises left to heal, but by the time the playoffs roll around, everyone knows who the real enemy is.

Is it so much different in a party primary campaign?

Trump is fond of saying that he hasn't even started to concentrate on Hillary yet, and while that's likely just a bunch of Trump-like bluster, it's basically true. Likewise, Cruz talks a lot about Hillary and the damage the Democrats have done to America, but he's also still engaged in a primary matchup where he's behind and needs to set contrasts with his opponent.

Hence, there's some negativity. And it can be damaging.

If you don't believe all the back-and-forth have been necessary to some extent, look at John Kasich. He's ahead in

opinion polls in hypothetical matchups with Hillary Clinton, yet can't get any traction in the Republican race. Continuing with my football analogy, Kasich is like the water boy who hasn't played very much and remains the favorite of teammates and coaches because he's made friends with everyone on the sidelines without doling out multiple contusions, abrasions and broken bones.

Rest assured, when the party finally settles on a nominee the "team" will turn their focus towards common enemy Hillary Clinton – and there's more than enough stored-up angst to go around.

Hardened from a tough pre-season, the "starters" will be ready to take on anything Clinton can dish out. If they can survive the intensity of training camp, facing a screechy old lady in a game setting will feel like a piece of cake.

And the national electorate will fall in line, too.

Open Convention throws vice president selection process into turmoil ... maybe

With the Republican presidential race far from settled, not much thought or attention has been given thus far to the number two slot on the future party ticket.

Of course there's been some talk about a "unity" ticket between Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio – or even some have suggested John Kasich – but nothing has come from it. The longer the race goes towards the convention, the less likely there will be any certainty regarding a potential vice presidential pick.

With so many unknowns, it could make for a very interesting convention if it's still in question who will join the eventual winner to challenge the Democrats in the fall.

Rebecca Berg of Real Clear Politics reports, "An open Republican convention would not only leave the party's

presidential nomination hanging in the balance until July: The question of a running mate for the nominee, a vitally important component of any campaign, could also remain unanswered until the GOP meets in Cleveland, or perhaps even later.

“This variable could create an added element of chaos to an already turbulent convention, possibly forcing a last-minute scramble to name a vice presidential candidate for the freshly minted nominee, or setting up a battle on the convention floor among multiple wannabe running mates.”

Wouldn't the media love it – a floor fight to determine the nominee and then another squabble to figure out who will run with the winner.

The convention's ratings will go through the ceiling, setting records for viewership. Literally, people all over the world will be watching the American political reality TV show unfold right before their eyes.

But that won't necessarily happen, at least if Trump or Cruz eventually wins – as it should be. A contested convention is looking more likely, true, but who's to say Donald Trump and Ted Cruz won't throw a wrench in the networks' plans and name a potential running mate prior to the convention?

Berg's article talks about how a mad scramble for a vice president (VP) at the convention would force the candidates to forego the usual vetting process for candidates, but if the Trump and Cruz camps aren't already hard at work vetting potential running mates, they should be sued for political malpractice.

This “worry” over the VP slot is over-the-top hype, just like a lot of things concerning the race. Assuming the contest goes all the way to the convention, Cruz and Trump will certainly have a short list to choose from taking into account different scenarios. I doubt they'd be willing to accept someone who's

not on their list just to win the nomination.

Here's saying the selection of a running mate could end up being a very interesting scene to watch – but it also might not be, too. Time will tell ... just another thing to think about ahead of the convention this July.

Sideline sitters need to ditch Kasich and support Cruz now

Of course, before Trump or Cruz even reach the point of being able to choose a running mate, they'll need to win the Republican nomination first.

Both hope to get as close as possible to the 1237 delegates needed to win on the first ballot and avoid the potential chaos that will ensue if a second or more ballots are needed.

For Cruz, that effort would be greatly enhanced by being able to take on Trump one-on-one during the second phase of the primary campaign. In order to do that, delusional John Kasich needs to get out of the race.

By all appearances, Kasich is sticking around in hopes he'll be chosen as a compromise candidate at the party convention. But if he truly believes it, he's crazy. And if he's sticking around at the urgency of others, that's just wrong.

Hoover Institution Fellow Jeremy Carl writes in *National Review*, "The Kasich campaign's notion that GOP delegates will ignore Trump and Cruz, and then anoint Kasich, who was decisively rejected by voters in the vast majority of GOP primaries, is literally nuts.

"It is possible that a Trump nomination would destroy the GOP, but an attempt by insiders to hand the nomination to Kasich over two candidates who decisively beat him at the polls would definitely destroy the GOP. The fact that this silliness is even being publicly entertained indicates that much of the establishment appears to be stuck in the 'denial' stage of the

grief process.”

When I wrote up above that the Republican “team” would eventually come together after a bruising training camp, I should’ve made it clear that Trump or Cruz would need to emerge as the “quarterback.” If the establishment “coaches” decide to bring in one of their sons to play because they couldn’t decide between the top two players, the “team” will revolt.

If the keepers of the GOP aren’t smart enough to recognize this, they’ll get their own reckoning in November. It’s time for everyone involved to tell Kasich in no uncertain terms he isn’t going to be receiving any media or party support if he stays in any longer.

In other words, Kasich’s delusional dream needs to end.

As Carl says in his article, the time for choosing has long passed.

New Fox poll shows Cruz within three points of Trump nationally

Finally this week, just when you thought the Republican race couldn’t get any hotter, a new Fox poll shows Ted Cruz within the margin of error nationally against Donald Trump.

Nolan D. McCaskill of Politico reports, “Ted Cruz has surged to within striking distance of toppling Donald Trump nationally, according to a national Fox News poll released on Wednesday.

“The New York billionaire still leads the three-man GOP primary race with 41 percent support. But, as the field has dwindled, support for the Texas senator’s campaign has doubled from 19 percent in February to 38 percent in the Fox poll. Kasich rounds out the survey with 17 percent support, with 1 percent undecided.”

McCaskill points out other recent surveys have shown Trump's lead as much larger.

But I think more than anything, the Fox poll shows the race is still in a state of flux. With Marco Rubio having exited just over a week ago, it's clear many Republican voters are still trying to figure out where they stand.

As the days go on and we move into April, things will clarify. Hopefully.

On a personal note, I hope everyone enjoys a very happy and meaningful Easter. Regardless of the political outcomes, we all truly have a lot to be grateful for.

Jeffrey A. Rendall *writes for* .