

It's Time for Ted Cruz to Move on From New York

A day after his impressive victory in New York, Donald Trump must be feeling pretty good right about now.

But he shouldn't be cocky. After all, Tuesday was the first time he's broken through the 50 percent barrier in any state—and it did come where people know him best. Just like Ted Cruz's win in Wisconsin didn't signal a huge shift in the overall race, Trump's triumph in New York (and probably victories next week) don't necessarily indicate people are ready to fully embrace his candidacy.

Trump's margin of victory was bigger than most anticipated, but I don't think anyone was shocked by it. On the contrary, Trump was expected to do well in liberal/moderate New York and he basically met those expectations. Plus, it's only one state ... not exactly a trend—yet.

How should Ted Cruz respond?

As my old law professor used to say when discussing multiple-choice test taking strategy, *"Hit and move on!"* Sometimes you don't always know the answers ... so take your best guess and then go on to the next question. It's a timed exam after all, right?

The Republican nomination race really isn't much different than a multiple choice test. Though New York was a seriously large bump in the road, Cruz needs to treat each day moving forward as a new chance to win something, somewhere.

It's almost like taking an NFL cornerback's attitude towards Trump's New York win. The Donald may have just beaten Cruz for a touchdown on a long pass, but there will be another play to stop after the other team gets the ball back.

As for the #NeverTrump folks, they need to take a similar approach, though their tactics may need to change a bit after next week's expected rough patch.

Byron York of the *Washington Examiner* writes, "They will probably work hardest toward blocking Trump in Indiana, which holds its primary on May 3, and in which Cruz is thought to have a solid chance. But before that, the race will hit what could be an inflection point.

"Next week, most likely, Cruz will be mathematically eliminated from winning 1,237 delegates before the Republican convention. Like Kasich, he will no longer have even a theoretical chance of entering the convention a winner. His campaign will be entirely negative—to keep Trump below 1,237. In effect, every vote for Cruz will be a strategic vote."

I doubt the change in emphasis will make much of a difference in voters' minds. We've known pretty much since Super Tuesday that it would be difficult to beat Trump to 1237 and the best bet for the not-Trump people was to try and hold him under that number and win the delegate game at the convention.

Ted Cruz was the only one who could make the case as a viable alternative to Trump then and it's true now too. Nothing's changed.

Instead, what is to be garnered from New York is perhaps a different way of looking at the race. All along, I've argued it was basically the "outsiders" versus the establishment. With Trump continuing to do so well, even when he loses, it's helpful to reclassify the competition a little differently.

The primary race is being driven by voters seeking an anti-establishment candidate AND an outsider. Trump is perceived as both. Cruz is anti-establishment, but voters aren't really seeing him as an outsider any longer, because he's an elected officeholder.

Is it a fair distinction? No. But because Ted has more or less worked in politics his entire career, he's seen as being part of the system, at least by an angry electorate looking for someone to come in and wreck the place.

Hence, Trump's attacks on the "rigged system" are hitting home with a certain segment of the Republican primary base. From the beginning, The Donald, Ben Carson and Carly Fiorina were the only ones who could legitimately claim to be "outsiders," because they have never held office before.

Seeing Trump's populist driven campaign, it's become evident that voters are seeking something far beyond just fixing the system. They want a person with a completely different perspective to come in and take control.

Trump fits the description perfectly, even if it's plausibly argued that he's part of what corrupted the system in the first place. I'm not saying he's the best candidate for this year or this Republican race. Far from it. But I think that's how people are viewing this election, since Trump doesn't have much of a platform and can't even articulate basic policy proposals other than "making great deals, build a beautiful wall and make China and Mexico play fair."

Voters' visceral response to Trump as the face of an anti-establishment outsider isn't much different than how patriotic Americans react to seeing a movie where some hero takes down a bad guy. They see him as a cavalryman charging the enemy with sword on high.

This is all well and good, but there's the practical reality involved with an election coming up against a very capable foe and the business of governing after that should Trump ultimately move into the White House. Cruz is an experienced campaigner and debater. Trump's not. The Donald's touched a nerve with the fed-up with Washington crowd, but how about the general electorate?

We will find out in the next few weeks whether voters in other parts of the country see it differently than those along the east coast.