

Mike Huckabee Reveals His Iowa Endgame: Will It Work?

In an in-depth interview with *National Review's* Tim Alberta, 2008 Iowa Republican Caucus winner former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee discussed what could be the final days of his political career.

The interview took place following a campaign finance reform discussion at an undisclosed hotel in downtown Des Moines, where he shocked the world eight years ago by coming out of nowhere to win the first-in-the-nation caucus. And, as Alberta, *National Review's* chief political correspondent, put it, his prospects for a repeat performance are as dreary as a mid-January day in the Hawkeye State:

Walking with a considerable limp, Huckabee, who until recently used a cane following November knee surgery, saunters gingerly through the sky-tunnels to avoid the piercing cold and drifting snow outside. There are plenty of passers-by. Some turn and recognize the former governor, the onetime Iowa winner, the Fox News personality and conservative favorite. But many others hurry by. When he arrives for lunch at a mostly-empty burger joint Huckabee is not greeted by fans seeking autographs or selfies; just a salad topped with minced salmon that we both agree looks like canned tuna. He shrugs, takes a few bites, and tries to put a positive spin on the situation. "It's not bad," he says.

But it's not good, either. The man who eight years ago won the most votes in the history of Iowa's Republican caucuses now finds himself polling ninth in the state, according to the RealClearPolitics average, at 2.6 percent. (June was the last time any poll showed him reaching double-digits.) He trails a host of first-time candidates, including several, such as Chris Christie and John Kasich, who hardly spend any time

here. Huckabee, meanwhile, 60 years old and visibly heavier after slimming down for his 2008 campaign, has nonetheless hustled to all 99 Iowa counties. But his hard work is not being rewarded. As Donald Trump and Ted Cruz draw colossal crowds and earn wall-to-wall coverage of their battle for Iowa, Huckabee hobbles through the state in relative obscurity, away from his wife, his grandchildren, and the beachfront home he always dreamed of, eating a dry salmon salad on a 10-degree day in Des Moines.

The article covers why Huckabee got into the race in the first place, and why he's remained in the race when others who were polling higher than him at the time have since dropped out. And, it addresses the question of whether or not he will drop out of the race before the Feb. 1 caucus.

"Quite frankly I wouldn't be doing 150 events in January in Iowa if I didn't think we had a shot to pull this off," Huckabee told Alberta. "I mean, I just wouldn't. I'm not that stupid."

His Real Clear Politics polling average in Iowa has climbed to 2.9 percent in the past week, but it's still far below his high-water mark in June. Right now, he's polling in eighth place, a tenth of a point higher than Ohio Gov. John Kasich, who has spent a fraction of the time Huckabee has spent in Iowa.