

Ted Cruz to National Review: 2016 Campaign was 'Flawless'

According to a new report Thursday by *National Review*, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) has chalked up his Republican presidential primary loss to the unexpected rise of Donald Trump, who accepted the GOP's nomination that evening.

Because of this, Cruz sees no need for a course correction. In an interview with NRO on the eve of his much-anticipated speech to the convention Wednesday night, the Republican runner-up reflected at length on the 2016 campaign. He did not, however, offer any critical analysis of his own performance. Asked at least three times to pinpoint failures in his candidacy—mechanical, personal, or otherwise—Cruz repeatedly demurred, pointing instead to outside elements that he claims were beyond his control.

"The two biggest reasons I think Trump won: It took too long for conservatives to unite at the outset, and he benefited from a splintered field being able to win early primaries with 28, 30, 32 percent of the vote," Cruz says. "Secondly, in the later stage of the campaign, the media narrative that Trump was unbeatable became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Donald received \$3 billion in free media. That is unprecedented."

Additionally, Cruz argues, "This was not an issues- or policy-based election, as much as I desperately tried to make it an issues-and-policy-based election. This was decided on factors other than issues." Asked what those factors were, Cruz pauses for 19 seconds before replying that he would rather not elaborate on the record. "He got more votes," Cruz finally says of Trump.

Otherwise, he described his 2016 campaign as "flawless."

While Cruz told *National Review* it's too early to worry about future presidential campaigns, the magazine noted he's merged his former presidential political operation with his Senate office staff. Meanwhile, his former Senate chief of staff is now taking on an advisory role for affiliated non-profits that are effectively a campaign-in-waiting ahead of 2020.

The decision Cruz and his team must make between now and then is whether that campaign will look and sound very similar to the 2016 version. The candidate himself seems to believe it will; his advisers might have other ideas.