

Presidential Candidate Bill Clinton Loses Outsider Role to Ross Perot

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What effect does Ross Perot have on Bill Clinton's campaign for President? Clinton's poll numbers show him dead last due to Perot's popularity.

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Transcript

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GARRICK UTLEY, anchor:

By any measure, this is truly a remarkable Presidential campaign. We're now nearing the end of the primary season and the most important factor in the race has nothing at all to do with primaries. Ross Perot is its—his name. For George Bush, Perot's rising popularity is an embarrassment. For Bill Clinton, it is an immediate problem. How does he get his campaign moving again? Here's Andrea Mitchell.

ANDREA MITCHELL reporting:

He still gets plenty of attention back home. After all, he's the state's Governor, and the party's probable Presidential nominee. But outside of Little Rock, Bill Clinton has been sinking fast in the polls. Instead of consolidating support as he heads toward July's Democratic Convention, he's dead last in a three-way race.

Governor BILL CLINTON: Most of the people voting in that poll don't know anything about me or my record, my commitments, or what I've advocated. They've just heard the bad stuff that came out in the primary.

MITCHELL: Instead of getting to know Clinton, people are following Ross Perot, who has dominated the news and replaced Clinton in voters' minds as the candidate of change.

Mr. ROSS PEROT: They said it couldn't be done. You did it. You did it well. You've sent a message.

Governor CLINTON: His popularity is rooted entirely in the fact that he is not a politician. He's--he--he has no previous experience in office. He didn't run in these primaries. He's never been beat up by the press or in public competition.

MITCHELL: Clinton has struggled to counteract Perot--so far, unsuccessfully.

Governor CLINTON: Part of it's my fault. I'm just a lousy sound bite politician. I'm just--I'm not very good, you know, on the evening news, thinking of that 8.7 seconds that you give--get, on the average, to bullet through something that stands for what you're really doing.

MITCHELL: Part of it is bad luck. Just when Clinton thought he'd capture the spotlight campaigning in California for the June 2nd primary, Californians were overwhelmed by the riots in Los Angeles. No one

wanted to listen to politicians. He's now trying to reclaim his role as political outsider, as with Katie Couric on Today.

Governor CLINTON: (From file footage) Voters dislike both parties. They believe they've been let down by both parties in Washington.

MITCHELL: That's also the theme of his new television advertisement running in California.

Governor CLINTON: (From Ad) And frankly, both parties in Washington have let us down.

MITCHELL: The question is, can he redefine himself before the Democratic Convention?

Mr. RON BROWN (Democratic National Chairman): I think he will, but I--I'm not sure that it's necessary to do it before the convention. You need to do it before the first Tuesday in November.

MITCHELL: Clinton had hoped people would see him as the challenger. Much to his frustration, so far they seem to view him as just another politician. Andrea Mitchell, NBC News, Washington.