

The Huffington Post



Peggy Drexler

Big Night for the Republican's New Alpha Girl. But What Now?

Posted September 5, 2008 | 12:11 PM (EST)

As they sweep up the confetti and stack the chairs in St. Paul, all the Republican players can depart having done did their jobs; professionally, if not memorably. Except for Gov. Sarah Palin, who rocked their house and won their hearts.

Like the third cup of coffee after a hangover, however, things are beginning to come into focus.

The best I can tell: a man named Matthew Scully wrote an excellent speech. And an attractive woman we (and Scully) barely knew did a very good job of reading it. As a side note, unless the Obamas have the most loyal and self-effacing speechwriters in the history of the craft, their words were their own.

Palin did what the McCain camp hired her to do. Nobody can fault that. But if you give the attractive young news anchor on your hometown station a world-class speechwriter and a team of handlers, my bet is that she could have pulled it off, too.

Also: the Republicans rope-a-doped the Democrats into driving down expectations so far that an adequate performance would look strong -- and a strong performance would shake the balloons loose from the rafters.

Now comes the hard part.

Critical questions about this unknown quantity are being beaten back for now with counter charges of sexism, ruralism, familyism and anything else the McCain camp can throw into the blame-the-media strategy.

But that act is already wearing thin. Unlike, the Clintons' remonstrations of sexism, the media is skipping the obligatory self-examination. The attitude this time: if you can skin a caribou, you can deal with us.

As she strides on to the national stage as the Republicans' first female vice presidential nominee, there is some toilet paper on her pumps.

Her positions will hardly rally the hordes of Hillary-istas who put those 18 million cracks in the glass ceiling: pro gun; anti abortion (even in incest and rape), pro teaching of intelligent design -- creationism we used to call it -- in schools; pro ban on gay marriage; pro death penalty. These aren't Hillary's people; they're Pat Robertson's people.

She also brings with her a documented history of firing people she doesn't like. And coming off its told-you-so moment with John Edwards, the National Enquirer has a team (pit bull: meet the dobermans) scouring the North County for dirt.

Now comes the sharp elbows of the actual campaign, including debating geopolitical strategy with bad Joe Biden, a man who does foreign policy for a living.

She should be justly pleased with her opening night reviews. She earned them. But now we find out if this show has legs.