

# Betting on Romney Begins to Make Sense Again

✘ It is two hours since the first presidential debate ended, and guess what: The money boys suddenly are looking at Mitt Romney with respect. On Intrade, the Irish-based futures market that allows you to bet legally on political races, the value of contracts favoring Romney over President Obama began shooting up in value as the debate wound to a close. There can be little doubt that Romney won the debate. Even Obama's most faithful supporters are conceding that. And on Intrade, where the Romney candidacy had dwindled to a pathetic longshot during the dog days of September, Romney has pulled off his own version of the October Surprise.

One cannot overestimate the importance of the first presidential debate. Remember 1980, when Ronald Reagan made a fool of Jimmy Carter? Carter never recovered, and lost a lopsided election. Remember 1960, the year the TV debates were first held, when Richard Nixon scared little children and their parents too with his 5 o'clock shadow and sinister scowl?

I would estimate that the first debate is three times more important than the remaining debates combined, because it sets the tone. Obama seemed tired and disinterested, as though he wanted to go back to Vegas, where he had prepped for the debate.

Romney, exhibited before a large TV audience without having to pass through the filter of the pro-Obama mainstream media, came across as an extremely articulate and well-informed challenger, eager to take on the task of sending America back on the road to economic and social recovery.

Some of the pundits said that Obama may have learned his

lesson and will come out swinging in the second debate, and he may indeed. But Romney and his team are smart enough to anticipate that, and to come up with the tactics required to effectively counter it.

Before the two national conventions, the bettors on Intrade already were giving Obama an edge. The consensus had him as a 55 percent favorite, perhaps because he was the incumbent, with the incumbent's normal edge at the start of a campaign.

I should point out that this did not mean he was expected to win 55 percent of the vote, but rather that he had a 55 percent chance of winning the election.

During poor Romney's march to Golgotha after the conventions, especially in the wake of former President Clinton's magic speech on behalf of Obama, the oddsmakers on Intrade boosted the President to a 78 percent favorite, close to a sure thing.

But the Obama balloon started leaking early this week, as the bettors became nervous about the impact of the debates. Going into Debate Number One, Obama was down to 73 percent.

What a difference one scintillating evening can make! Obama is dropping on the Intrade market as we speak, and is down to around 65 percent. That is not unimpressive, but I am going to bed soon, and I expect to find him lower still when I wake from my beauty sleep.

Then, let the pollsters go back to the swing states, and let Romney show a boost from the debate, and it wouldn't surprise me if Romney pulls even or takes the lead.

If you want to check the tally yourself, go to [www.intrade.com](http://www.intrade.com).

I must confess that I didn't go into the debate expecting such a onesided result. I figured that Obama would play Mr. Personality, as usual, and make his jokes, and mute whatever serious things his opponent had to say.

Not so. There were even times when Romney was vigorously telling Obama what was wrong with his administration, and Obama seemed to be nodding in agreement.

Wow! This campaign has legs after all.