

Can Biden Beat Trump? Can He Even Win His Party's Nomination?

You could make the case that for a whole bunch of reasons Joe Biden probably has the best chance of all the Democratic candidates to beat Donald Trump.

Biden is a moderate, relatively speaking anyway. And the middle is where elections are won and lost. He can win swing voters to his side, a must-have constituency if you expect to win the White House. He's got more experience in government than any of his opponents – vice president for 8 years, Senator for 36 years. He's got a lot going for him. On paper, anyway.

But given the state of the modern Democratic Party, there's also a downside for Biden. He's a straight, white, older male – all negatives in Progressive Land, the wing of the party where the energy resides.

And we haven't even gotten to his propensity to sniff hair and rub shoulders.

Still, along with Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden is atop the polls at this point. How long that will last is another story.

My conservative friends tell me that Biden can't win the nomination. He's out of touch with his party, they tell me. Yes, but if the many progressives in the race split the primary votes, Biden can sneak in and win enough states to capture the nomination.

But then, Joe being Joe, he might say something "controversial" – like Mike Pence is "a decent guy," a compliment Biden apologized for after Cynthia Nixon went after

him on Twitter.

Or he might say that he'll compromise with Republicans to get things done in Washington. Sounds good to reasonable people, but it won't help him as far as the hard left of the party is concerned.

He also apologized for how he conducted the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings when he led the Senate Judiciary Committee. "I wish I could have done something. I opposed Clarence Thomas's nomination, and I voted against him," Biden said all these years later. "But I also realized that there was a real and perceived problem the committee faced: "There were a bunch of white guys."

He also talked about what he called, "A white man's culture: and said, "It's got to change. It's got to change."

Blue-collar white guys in places like Ohio and Pennsylvania and Michigan and Wisconsin – the voters Biden supposedly has a visceral connection to – may not feel all that privileged and might take offense when a politician tells them "the white man's culture has to change."

And as an editorial in the Wall Street Journal points out, "Mr. Biden may also have to apologize for his opposition to forced busing in the 1970s, his opposition to reparations for slavery, his 1993 support for harsher criminal sentences, and his support for George W. Bush's Iraq war, among many other offenses against the new left orthodoxy. None of this festival of regret will make Mr. Biden look like a strong leader."

If his campaign turns into an apology tour, that's another reason he may not win. Moving left may not be such a good idea, either. What happens when he's asked how he feels about the Green New Deal, or "free" college, or a 70 percent top tax rate, or a wealth tax, or Medicare for All, or impeachment?

If Biden feels pressure to get with the program and starts to sound like all the other progressives, voters will wonder what

makes him different from the rest?

Free stuff, impeachment and the rest will matter, but not as much as the single biggest issue for Democrats – Donald Trump himself. Beating him will take precedence over everything else. And if it looks like Biden has the best shot to make Mr. Trump a one-term president, if he picks a woman as his running mate, preferably a woman of color, then even the hard left will take a deep breath and hop on the Biden bandwagon.

This is Biden's third try for the gold ring. And at 76, it's the last chance he'll have to run for president. If he can capture his party's nomination, 2020 will be his best chance to win the big prize. On paper, anyway.