

Could Ben Carson Be a Kingmaker in the GOP Primary?



The results of Monday's Iowa Caucus seem to prove what many observers have been speculating: the Republican presidential primary is a three-man race. Though that could change as early as next week, Ted Cruz, Donald Trump, and Marco Rubio are currently the candidates that have the momentum – something that's vitally important in a presidential campaign.

Sure, Iowa was a disappointing loss for Trump; he was favored to win the state, and many people were already considering him to be the inevitable GOP nominee. Still, his poll numbers are looking good for next week's New Hampshire primary, and Cruz and Rubio will likely build on the media hype they're enjoying for beating Iowa expectations.

What does this mean for the other candidates who are part of this large GOP group? Huckabee bowed out Monday night, and Santorum looks like he's soon to follow. Kasich, Bush, and Christie are teetering on double-digit support in New Hampshire polls, where they're dividing the field among voters who prefer a more traditional, policy-focused candidate. Thus, it's worth it for them to stay in the race...at least for now.

One name now notably absent from the conversation is Dr. Ben Carson, a man who once shared front-runner status with Donald Trump. Carson took 9% of the votes in the Iowa Caucus and is currently polling in New Hampshire at around 3%, with no uptick in support anticipated.

It's hard to see a pathway to victory for Dr. Carson, a man whose weaknesses as a politician have included inexperience in governing, a lack of knowledge in key areas of policy, and a propensity for committing verbal gaffes. Still, I think his waning candidacy may yet prove particularly relevant in this primary.

The general consensus among not just Republican voters but also independents (and even some Democrats) is that Dr. Carson is a good man. Sure, he's made some insensitive comments throughout the campaign – most of them tied to his socially conservative sensibilities and a lack of political training. Those comments understandably offended some, and led to apologies from Carson. Still, a lot of people listen to Carson's soft-spoken belief in a peaceful message of American unity, and recognize its authenticity.

It's that message that brought a couple thousand people to a book signing of his that I attended in Colorado in August of 2014, nearly a year before he announced his candidacy; attendees hung on his every word. It's also that message that made Carson the first 2016 presidential candidate whose name I saw turning up on people's car-bumpers – and not just a few. I still see the "America Needs a Doctor" bumper-sticker more than any other.

The evidence of Carson's grassroots support goes far beyond anecdotal, of course. He has continued to pull in huge fundraising numbers in recent months, even as his poll numbers have declined.

Even those who don't agree with Carson, or don't think he's a viable candidate, seem to respect him. And respect is certainly a rare thing in politics.

While I don't think Carson will last much longer in this presidential race, I do believe his endorsement (and active campaigning) could be extremely valuable to another candidate.

Though Trump has long remained the national front-runner in the GOP field, his popularity has never reflected a consensus (roughly two thirds of Republicans still want someone else). Simply put, there is *no* consensus at this point in time.



Breaking: Presidential candidate Donald Trump endorses John A. Daly's new novel.

Carson, as a man many people have come to admire, could potentially wind up as a kingmaker in this respect.

Who would Carson endorse? It's hard to say. I doubt he'd get behind the current front-runner – a man who mocked his faith and compared him to a child molester. He also seems unlikely to support Ted Cruz, whose campaign he believes spread false rumors about him on Iowa caucus night – rumors that cost him votes. Still, anything's possible. I've seen stranger alliances.

What I *am* confident in saying is that "How can I butter up Ben Carson?" is a question candidates should be asking their campaign strategists right about now.

Bios & Biases

Every so often, so many items capture my attention that I either have to get them down on paper or accept the fact that I can never hope to catch up. But never let it be said that Prelutsky took the easy, logical, sane, commonsensical, approach.

To get the ball rolling, let me confess that I not only tend to shy away from non-fiction books in general, but even more so when it comes to biographies. I have multiple problems with them. To begin with, they are written by researchers and academicians, and so I usually find the writing dry and humorless. For another, they tend to begin with a rundown on the subject's ancestors. Although parents and grandparents may have played a huge role in the way the person turned out, if I wanted to read about them, I'd be reading their biographies. My third reason, shameful as it must sound to many of you, is that I'm not that interested in reading five or six hundred pages about any one person.

Before opening the floodgates to well-intentioned suggestions for my reading list, understand I have come to these conclusion through experience, not rumor. To me, sitting down with a biography is the equivalent of asking someone for the time and being told how to make a watch.

I confess that as cynical as I am, even I'm shocked that so many people seem to be up in arms over the NSA keeping track of millions of phone numbers, but are seemingly unconcerned that the ObamaCare website has rolled out the equivalent of a red carpet for every computer hacker between here and Timbuktu. They don't even have to say "Open Sesame" in order to know everything about you, including your medical history,

your birthday, your social security number, your bank account and, yes, even your telephone number.

By this time, I assume everyone has seen the stomach-turning video of the little black child in a diaper being coached by his gangbanging uncle to repeat the most vulgar words imaginable. What I found interesting is that when some cop in Omaha used the word "thug" in referring to the uncle, the ACLU immediately jumped in to denounce him for employing a racist term. It's one thing to be a knucklehead and quite another to hire a skywriter to let the world know about it.

Everyone knows that "thug" is a generic word that has no racial connotations. Thugs come in all sizes, shapes and colors. But the mopes at the ACLU who'd go out of business if they couldn't trump up cases based on matters as trivial as hurt feelings or intentional misinterpretations of the Constitution, let us all know that whenever they hear "thug" or, I assume, "bully," "dope dealer," "rapist" or "scumbag," they immediately assume the reference is to a black person. I'm just asking, you understand, but doesn't that qualify as racist?

Although the next presidential election is still nearly three years off, I am already hearing from those who are certain that Obama is planning to pull off a coup so he can become a dictator for life. I grant that he doesn't show a lot of respect towards the Constitution or even American traditions, for that matter, but I have to wonder how it is that the paranoiacs seem to have so little confidence in the military that they'd believe the Army would be party to a power-grab.

It so happens that I've been doing this for so long that I've heard the same concerns when Clinton and Bush were into their second terms. I acknowledge that Obama is a far worse menace than either of them, but this is not a banana republic. There's no getting around the fact that the Obamas love the perks of the office, but inasmuch as the Clintons were able to

bank over \$100,000,000 between 2001 and 2008, I'm sure the Obamas will be able to pay for their own vacations after 2016.

Speaking of Obama, he and Kerry are clearly dying to give the store away to Iran. In fact they are so desperate to cut a deal with the mullahs, and make it appear they've scored a diplomatic success, they are willing to sell what passes for their souls to the Devil.

Nearly 70 senators, including about 20 Democrats, are basically saying, "Okay, negotiate with the bastards all you want, but if after six months, they haven't agreed to halt their pursuit of a nuclear bomb, tougher economic sanctions will automatically kick in." Aside from the fact that sitting down with jihadists makes about as much sense as Chamberlain trying to placate Hitler, you would think that Obama and Kerry could live with it. But the Iranians are insisting that they won't negotiate with a threat hanging over their head. To me, the real problem is that the threat they face is merely financial and not thermonuclear.

With 2016 lurking around the corner, I was heartened to hear RNC kingpin Reince Priebus say that there are changes in the wind. Among those he mentioned was a shortened primary season, an end to the liberals controlling the debate formats and a much earlier date for the GOP convention. Those are all good ideas, and could go a long way to cut down on the backstabbing and bloodletting that invariably accompanies our internecine battles.

However, I would also suggest that the GOP finally grows up and puts a stop to the Iowa caucus, a charade that eats up enormous amounts of time and money, and doesn't even result in the allocating of convention delegates.

As for New Hampshire, a tiny state that gets overinflated to such a degree that for a time during an election year, you would think it was the size of Texas or California. In fact it

is no more entitled to hold the first primary than my big toe. At least my toe is representative of my foot, whereas New Hampshire is representative of nothing, including Vermont and Maine.

I will close with a bit of folk wisdom someone recently sent me: "A Liberal Paradise would be a place where everybody has guaranteed employment, free comprehensive healthcare, free education, free food, free housing, free clothing, free utilities; and only Law Enforcement has guns. Such a place does exist. It's called prison."

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