



At High-Stakes Debate, VP Candidates Face Unique Challenges

Going into their first and only debate, Joe Biden has to hold back and Sarah Palin has to let loose, analysts say.

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Joe Biden and Sarah Palin have one shot Thursday night to challenge each other in person on issues, on experience, on judgment and on political agility.

(Article cut)

Palin on Offense: Be confident and knowledgeable. But be yourself. Contrast your fresh ideas and accomplishments with Biden's long history of votes and speeches.

"She just needs to come across as Sarah Palin," Republican strategist Anne Dickerson said.

That's been a popular tip for the first-term Alaska governor in the wake of her interviews with CBS News' Katie Couric over the past week. In the interviews, she struggled to name Supreme Court cases she disagreed with. She struggled to explain her claim that Alaska's proximity to Russia gives her foreign policy experience. She even declined to name the periodicals she reads.

To turn the tables, analysts say, she's got to go after Biden as being an unproductive member of the Washington establishment whose hundreds of committee hearings don't necessarily qualify him to be vice president. But she's also got to unleash the charming, and disarming, persona she showed in Alaska while complementing that with a firm knowledge of the issues.

Don Rieck, executive director of the **Center for Media and Public Affairs**, said the best way for her to do that is to focus on energy -- which is by turns an economic issue and a foreign policy issue.

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One Obama aide told FOX News on Thursday that if everything goes well, most people won't even remember Biden was there. In other words, his instructions are to keep the focus on Palin. Should Palin attack, and she most certainly will, Biden must watch his temperament, and his propensity for off-color wisecracks.

He has to be a "very calm and peaceful and pithy version of himself," Dickerson said. "Which means he has to be that which he normally is not."

Rieck said Biden's experience is still an asset, and he should show his competence on the world stage by tactfully discussing the meetings he's held with foreign heads of state, etc.

That too is a tightrope walk.

It's "a little tricky. ... In a 'change' year, that doesn't always work," Rieck said.

FOX News' Judson Berger, Major Garrett and Aaron Bruns contributed to this report.

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