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Heck of a Ride

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Everyone knows that Barack Obama got terrific media coverage during the campaign.

How good was it?

The best ever recorded by the Center for Media and Public Affairs, which has been monitoring campaign reporting since 1988.

More than *twice* as positive as John McCain's.

In a report being released today, the Washington-based group says that during the fall campaign, Obama drew 68 percent positive evaluations, compared with 33 percent for McCain and 34 percent for Sarah Palin.

An important caveat, though, is that the center studied only the three network evening newscasts and the first half of Fox's "Special Report." It's a good barometer, but doesn't even include CNN, MSNBC or the Fox opinion shows, let alone newspapers and magazines.

Obama outperformed John Kerry, who drew 59 percent positive assessments in 2004, the group says. McCain's showing was the worst since George Bush the elder, whose coverage was only 29 percent positive in 1988.

Now it's undoubtedly true that the figures were strongly influenced by the horse race. Obama ran a more disciplined campaign and was ahead in the polls almost continuously. But the group found that Obama also had a 2 to 1 lead in evaluations of the candidates' policies and proposals.

The Democratic nominee fared far worse on Brit Hume's Fox show, drawing 37 percent positive coverage. But that was close to McCain's 41 percent positive coverage. On issues, though, the comments on McCain's policies were 61 percent positive, compared with 33 percent positive for Obama.

The study doesn't include the transition, but if you look at the way Obama is being treated during this interim period -- well, can you score higher than 100 percent?

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