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Performance Marks

Bush's second inaugural.

By T. J. Walker

So how did Bush do?

Message: Bush struck a lofty and conciliatory message. He was in favor of freedom and against tyranny. He seemed to be addressing the international community as well as his constituents. Speaking with humility, he stated that the U.S is not a "chosen nation." Plus, he said, "America will not impose its own style on the unwilling." Bush's message was ideologically muted; he spoke more about fighting racial discrimination than he did about Iraq. I'm still not quite sure what agenda Bush has for his second term, but at least he didn't offend anyone with his speech.

Memorable Moments: Quick, name anything you remember from any president's second inaugural address. That's hard to do. Bush put forth no magical phrase or moment that will live on, a la Kennedy's "ask not..." But neither did Clinton or Reagan in their second inaugural addresses.

Mood: Bush displayed his trademark optimism and confidence, yet without any signs of cockiness or smugness.

Style: Bush knows this is an historic moment and he did his best to fill the podium with gravitas. Nothing cute today, and that's fine. He was solid and serious.

Mannerisms: The smirks were gone. No winks. No nervous twitches (and no mystery boxes under the back of his jacket) The one less-than-ideal mannerism Bush displayed was the narrowing of his eyes and eyebrows while reading. This is a normal thing to do when reading at a distance of several feet, but it makes the speaker look less than totally comfortable and relaxed.

Delivery: Bush started out slow and plodding. His speed was so consistent as to make him seem non-conversational. (This is the most common negative effect when reading from a TelePrompTer) The effect is that Bush became a bit monotone.

Timing: Bush finished in 20 minutes. He started and finished right on time.

Audience Reaction: Applause was tepid, at best. Bush didn't disappoint, but he didn't inspire his faithful either. The only strong reaction was just as he was finishing.

Major Blunders: None. No blunders. No stammers. Not a Bushism in site. Not a single tang was tongued.

— *T. J. Walker is the president of [Media Training Worldwide](#).*