

## Symposium

Expert Opinion

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### T. J. Walker

George W. Bush accomplished his major goals of the evening.

- Defending his administration's domestic policies.
- Portraying himself as someone who reflects middle-class social and cultural values.
- Painting Sen. Kerry as an out-of-touch "liberal" who has no major accomplishments.

And Bush, following his improved second debate performance, continued to display good body language, comfort, and confidence (though he did seem a tad giddy in the opening 30 minutes). But the president does annoy. Bush says the name "Ted Kennedy" with such a barely contained smirk; it's like listening to Beavis and Butthead trying to discuss the male anatomy with a straight face in junior-high health class. Plus, Bush still shows extreme signs of inarticulateness. He says "buggy and horse" days instead of the more common "horse and buggy." Finally, is it too much to ask that the president of the United States know to say "a friend of Laura and mine" instead of the cringe-inducing "of Laura and I," as Bush did in his closing comments?

John Kerry was smooth, polished, poised, and confident throughout the entire 90 minutes. His delivery, mannerisms, and grammar were impeccable. But Kerry committed major strategic blunders. Namely, he spent too much time on defense. Kerry was constantly explaining that he wouldn't give away a veto of our security to another country, that he didn't only pass five bills in Congress, or that he didn't really want the government to run health care.

Additionally, Kerry allowed himself to be painted clearly as a 1984-style interest group liberal. Every other answer seemed to focus on minimum wage, abortion, or affirmative action. Finally, Kerry got caught saying things that don't pass even his supporters' B.S. detector. When asked how he felt about priests who tell Catholics that it is a big sin to vote for Kerry, he responded "I respect that." When of course the real answer is, "I think those fools should keep their big yaps shut!"

This debate was a small victory for Bush on points, but will sway few undecided voters.

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