Clinton clinches to cheers, followed by a walkout

Kyle Bagenstose, staff writer  Jul 26, 2016

Come the morning of Nov. 9, the events of the second day of the Democratic National Convention could very well be looked upon as key in the outcome of the presidential election.

Should Hillary Clinton emerge as the first female president of the United States, she'll be able to point to Tuesday as the day the party was able to convince enough of the Bernie Sanders crowd, including influential figures within his movement, to bury the hatchet and throw their support behind her.

But should she lose, the Sanders delegates who walked out of the convention after she clinched the nomination will be remembered as a preview of her failure to unite the party in the City of Brotherly Love.

Proceedings Tuesday began smoothly enough, with speakers continuing to hammer home the concept of inclusiveness, one of the convention's main themes.

Dr. Sherman Jackson, an imam and Islamic scholar, delivered an invocation that included a plea to God that America not be placed among nations that suffer from "arrogance, heedlessness, or just bad leadership."
Timmy Kelly, a Temple University student who is blind and has cerebral palsy, sang the national anthem to raucous applause. Tom Harkin, a former U.S. Senator from Iowa, delivered a speech celebrating the 26th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

But the drama ramped up significantly when newly appointed convention chairwoman Marcia Fudge, a U.S. representative from Ohio, took the stage to announce that a roll call vote would be held to elect the Democratic nominee for president. Three nominating speakers delivered speeches of support for both candidates.

For Clinton, the speakers were: U.S. Sen. Barbara Mikulski of Maryland; U.S. Congressman John Lewis of Georgia; and New York delegate Na’ilah Amaru. For Sanders, the speakers were: Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii; Boston union leader Paul Feeney; and Sanders delegate Shyla Nelson of Vermont.

All gave speeches supporting their candidate, but even Feeney -- Sanders' campaign director for Massachusetts -- used the opportunity to say that the time had come for the senator's supporters to support Clinton.

"Bernie's campaign came together around a shared set of values and ideals ... like the fight for $15 (minimum wage), the fight for unions, the fight against economic inequality," Feeney said. "But all of those things are nothing more than words on paper, unless we decide, as Bernie asked us to last night, to join together and support Hillary Clinton in November."

The words drew a chorus of cheers from the arena, with just the slightest hint of booing evident.

As state delegations began to cast their votes, it seemed that many of the competing cheers for Clinton and Sanders ended and the crowd began to unify behind Clinton.

By the time South Dakota's delegates cast their votes, Clinton unceremoniously passed the 2,383 delegates needed to clinch the nomination. The Vermont delegation passed its spot in rotation in favor of going last, enabling Sanders to join it on the floor.

It was then that Sanders placed the final nail in the coffin of his presidential campaign.

"I move that the convention suspend the procedural rules ... and I move that Hillary Clinton be selected as the nominee," Sanders said.

The Wells Fargo Center erupted in cheers from what appeared to be all corners.

But just minutes later, a contingent of Sanders delegates, joined by other protesters, exited the arena chanting, "Walk out, Walk out." They spent about an hour surrounding the media compound behind the Wells Fargo Center, holding signs protesting everything from perceived corruption within the Democratic party to the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Their absence left obviously vacant spots on the convention floor as the evening's slate of speakers continued. Whether those holes in the Democratic base are wide enough to swallow the Clinton campaign may not be evident until all the votes have been counted in November.

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