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Fabrizio: Trump Can Stop Hillary in 'Ugliest Campaign Ever'



By David A. Patten | Wednesday, 09 Mar 2016 07:50 PM

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Voter perceptions of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump are so negative they appear virtually unprecedented in the modern political era, according to veteran strategist and pollster Tony Fabrizio.

"I would venture to say that historically we've never had a presidential campaign start off with both major party candidates in such bad shape, image-wise, as these two are going to start out." Fabrizio tells Newsmax.

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rebuilding their respective reputations. In fact, of the 1,500 registered voters who were surveyed online, 24 percent stated that they disliked both candidates.

When voters were asked what they liked least about Trump, 24 percent described him as either "arrogant," "rude," "a bully," "a jerk," or as someone who brags too much.

But Clinton fared even worse. When asked what they liked least about Clinton, 32 percent of voters said she was "dishonest" or "untrustworthy," or "lies."

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Based on those numbers, Fabrizio says the race in the minds of voters would essentially be "a contest between 'an arrogant bully' and 'a liar.'"

The result will probably be "one of the nastiest campaigns we've ever seen," he says, adding: "The candidate who is smart here will keep their foot on their opponent's throat. You need to do that."

Fabrizio says, however, it may be easier for Trump to persuade voters he's not a bully than for Clinton to persuade voters she's not untrustworthy.

"How do you fix being a liar, when this scandal is just going to continue to roil, and it's all about the e-mails?" he asks. "How do you make yourself not a liar anymore when this is only going to get worse for you and every day there's another story?"

Democrats have been praying for — and in some cases voting for — Donald Trump to win the GOP nomination in droves. But long-time pollster Fabrizio, a veteran of four presidential campaigns, warns they should be careful what they wish for. Democrats, he adds, "are beginning to see that Trump has appeal."

The exclusive Newsmax/Fabrizio, Lee & Associates poll released Wednesday afternoon shows the race a statistical dead heat in a hypothetical match-up, with Clinton leading Trump 45 to 44 percent. The survey has a 2.5 percent margin of error.

Fabrizio, the nationally recognized opinion expert and co-founder and partner of the Fabrizio, Lee & Associates polling firm, says the recent online survey of 1,500 registered voters suggests several pathways to a Trump victory that would fly in the face of predictions that the real estate and entertainment mogul would be un-electable in November.

"I think the pundits have missed the ball," Fabrizio says, calling it "just ridiculous" that some commentators have tried to write Trump off in the

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regarding Trump's pathway to victory, if he's able to win the GOP nomination.

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- **Tone It Down.** Noting Clinton gets better marks for presidential temperament, he says Trump should tone it down. "If I were advising him, I would take temperament off the table," he says. "I'm not saying don't be brash. Say what you're going to say, people get that. But there's a way you can take temperament off the table and you can still be a straight talker."
- **Stay on the Offense.** With both Trump and Clinton recording high negatives, he says, "The candidate who is smart here will keep their foot on their opponent's throat. You need to do that. Trump should never give up talking about her honesty, her integrity, [saying] you can't trust her."
- **Don't Neglect the Issues.** A scorched-earth campaign won't be enough. Polls show voters agree with Trump on issues like a tougher foreign-policy stance and reducing the size of government. Fabrizio says Trump should highlight these policy differences at every turn: "There needs to be a clear distinction between the two on what they actually believe," he says.
- **Shore Up the GOP Base.** Some Republicans, he says, "are kind in flux." They won't vote for Hillary, but they don't like Trump – and if they sit out the election his margin for error will quickly dwindle. Trump has to figure out how to get them back into the GOP column. "If he solidified Republicans," Fabrizio says, "she'd be dead."
- **Go Lightly on Obama.** Some pundits suggest the key to a GOP victory is linking Clinton to Obama as closely as possible. But Fabrizio warns that could equate to throwing Clinton a life preserver. The reason: Obama's favorable ratings are much higher than hers are. "Use him when you have to use him," he says, "but don't use him to give her a life-preserver – because he's in better shape than she is."
- **Work With the Pros.** Trump has serious obstacles to overcome – particularly with suburban women – and must not continue to act as his own strategist. "He can only win this if he runs a real campaign," Fabrizio says. "It looks like in Michael Bloomberg's decision not to run for president, he did more campaign stuff than Trump did running for president. We all know Trump disparages consultants and pollsters and thinks everybody is a con man. ... You cannot go into a general election for president and not have a clear strategy, a clear message, a clear organizational structure. You just can't, because Clinton is going to eat your lunch on things she shouldn't."

Fabrizio adds that the Clinton campaign has yet to decide how it will try to present Trump to the public.

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"Because when you make them a flip-flopper, that makes it hard to make him a right-wing kook. Because that means he can change his mind, he's not doctrinaire. So that's the problem they face," he said, "they've got to decide which it is."

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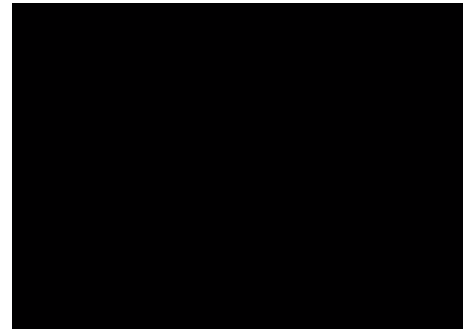
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