

Extra Feature Story

Presidential Candidates Turn to Next Big Contest: Super Tuesday

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New Hampshire's primary voters rejected the winners of Iowa's caucuses, breathing life into two presidential campaigns that had been showing recent signs of faltering, and setting up Feb. 5 as a critical contest in the race to the White House.

But with the much-ballyhooed Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary now in the political rearview mirror, both the Democratic and Republican nominating races remain very much undecided.

Hillary Clinton and John McCain

In the crush of early primaries, the candidates will get a relative breather as some Republicans head toward a devalued Michigan primary and contests in Nevada and South Carolina, leaving Sens. Hillary Clinton and John McCain a week to savor wins -- as well as collect new funds for their campaigns and erase some viability concerns.

"I felt like we all spoke from our hearts and I am so gratified that you responded," Clinton said in victory remarks before cheering supporters in New Hampshire Tuesday. "Now together, let's give America the kind of comeback that New Hampshire has just given me."

She beat Iowa caucus winner Sen. Barack Obama by two percentage points, and former Sen. John Edwards by more than 10 points.

McCain again proved himself to be a comeback specialist, a survivor who weathered more than five years in a Vietnam POW camp, a wrenching congressional scandal and three bouts with aggressive skin cancer.

"The people of New Hampshire have told us again that they do not send us to Washington to serve our interests, but to serve theirs," McCain said during his victory speech, amid chants of campaigns new slogan, "Mac is back!"

Once considered the favorite in the GOP field, McCain's campaign nearly collapsed last summer as he defended a plan to give illegal immigrants an eventual path to citizenship and the troop surge in Iraq.

But in recent weeks, McCain shot ahead of former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and finally former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney in the polls in New Hampshire, the site of his biggest primary victory in the 2000 nominating race against George W. Bush.

Former Gov. Mike Huckabee, the surprise Iowa winner, came in third in New Hampshire, where there are far fewer conservative voters.

Barack Obama and Mitt Romney

McCain's win Tuesday dealt another hefty blow to Romney's campaign, which finished second in the Granite State despite its deeper pockets and advertising deluge.

Alluding to his experience running the Olympic Games, Romney thanked largely overlooked Wyoming for his first-place finish during that state's weekend GOP primary as he tried to put the best face on the New Hampshire results.

"Well, another silver," he said to his supporters. "I'd rather have a gold but I got another silver. There have been three races so far, I've gotten two silvers and one gold."

Obama's bid got a boost Wednesday when he picked up the endorsement of the 60,000-member Culinary Workers Union in Nevada, 10 days before that state's caucus.

Since Obama's victory in Iowa, the volume of calls and inquiries into his campaign had more than doubled, with financial contributors, policy supporters and volunteers eager to join the campaign, the New York Times reported.

Obama is also betting big on a strong showing in South Carolina's Jan. 26 Democratic contest. Half of all registered Democrats in the state are African-American and could opt to back the freshman senator.

Looking ahead to the intense round of primaries, Obama told NBC's morning show, "Right now we're in a very close contest that'll probably go all the way through February 5th, as the voters lift the hood and kick the tires and make an assessment who's going to really fight for them and their families."

Next steps

Edwards, who finished second in Iowa and third in New Hampshire, pointed out to his supporters that 99 percent of the country's population has yet to vote.

Next on the campaign calendar is the Michigan primary on Jan. 15, but don't expect to see any Democrats there. After the state bucked both major political parties' rules to move up its primary date, it will be stripped of half its Republican delegates and every Democratic delegate.

The crown jewel of the primary season -- contests in 22 states on Feb. 5 -- still looms on the horizon for the remaining candidates, none of whom immediately announced plans to drop out after New Hampshire's vote.

-- Compiled by Leah Clapman for NewsHour Extra

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