

Most observers agree: Biden falls flat against Trump in first 2024 U.S. presidential debate



The current president was perceived as stumbling over his words while the Republican Trump repeated numerous falsehoods.

Atlanta, June 28 (RHC)-- U.S. President Joe Biden and Donald Trump have squared off in the first debate of the 2024 United States presidential race, seeking to pull ahead in a match-up that has, so far, been in a dead heat. But despite delivering the opening salvo in Thursday's event, Biden struggled to articulate his points at several moments, appearing to fumble for his words.

Meanwhile, Trump took the opportunity to redirect the conversation at several points to Biden's perceived weaknesses, drumming up fears about immigration and the state of the economy. He also attempted to dodge questions about whether he would honor the results of November 5's presidential election, saying he would only do so if it was "fair" and "free" – and then reiterating false claims that the 2020 election was rigged.

"The fraud and everything else was ridiculous," he said at one point, casting doubt on President Biden's win in 2020.

Trump currently faces two criminal indictments – one in Georgia and another in Washington, DC – over his alleged attempts to subvert those election results.

Thursday evening's performance took place at the CNN news network's studios in Atlanta, Georgia, and it marked the first time since October 2020 that the two candidates met on the debate stage.

Many political observers wondered if they would be rusty, neither having participated in a public debate of any kind in the years since. Biden had spent the week leading up to the debate at Camp David in Maryland, a presidential retreat where aides helped him prepare with mock set-ups. Trump, meanwhile, largely continued his schedule of rallies.

But from the moment Biden stepped on stage, the Democratic president seemed to wobble, muttering as he approached the podium. Still, as he faced the first question of the night, Biden came out swinging, seeking to dent Trump's popularity by attacking the Republican's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We had an economy that was in free fall," Biden told the room, which was largely empty except for two CNN moderators, Dana Bash and Jake Tapper. "By the time he left, things were in chaos. Things were in chaos. So we put things back together."

He also mocked Trump's resistance to COVID-19 safeguards, saying his philosophy echoed the misinformation circulating online about cures: "Just inject a little bleach into your arm, and you'll be alright."

But when Trump was given a chance to respond, his opening remarks reflected a characteristic hyperbole the Republican candidate has become known for.

"We had the greatest economy in the history of our country. We have never done so well. Everybody was amazed by it. Other countries were copying us," Trump said in his opening remarks, quipping later: "Everything was rocking good."

The night was a crucial event for both Trump and Biden, as they sought to advance different visions of the US. Trump implied that the country declined under Biden's leadership. Biden, meanwhile, sought to defend the US's standing in the world.

“I’ve never heard a president talk like this before. We’re the envy of the world. Name me a single major country that wouldn’t trade places with the United States of America,” said Biden at one point.

“No one thinks we’re weak. No one wants to screw around with us. Nobody.”

Trump, however, fired back at one point: “Joe, our country is being destroyed as you and I sit up here and waste a lot of time on this debate.”

In the lead-up to Thursday’s debate, polls showed Trump and Biden in a tight race, though the Republican appeared to be edging ahead.

A survey from The New York Times and Siena College, released on the eve of the event, showed Trump with nearly 48 percent support, close to four points ahead of Biden, who was around 44 percent.

Political observers noted that Thursday’s performance could deepen that divide.

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