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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 01, 2004

My Two Cents

by Michael in New York on 10/01/2004 05:01:00 AM

Okay, most everyone has gone to bed so I'll throw in my slightly off-message comments. I was at a Yankee game and came home at midnight so I had the typically surreal experience of watching the debates, discussing it with a friend and then absorbing the post-debate coverage on ABC, CNN, MSNBC, FOX and elsewhere. As often happens when you isolate yourself, my reaction to the debate was quite different....

But don't stop cheering Kerry. We're winning the post-debate spin and that's what really matters. ABC News was all pro Kerry on substance and style, (though Nightline had really lame guests and seemed to be more wishy-washy about who'd won). Everyone described the Kerry camp as jubilant and the Bush camp as defensive. Jon Stewart (duh), Chris Matthews, Larry King all were quoting poll after poll showing Kerry had come out best, looked presidential and had the big Mo (momentum) in his favor. Great!

Personally, however, I was disappointed though not disheartened by Kerry's performance. He held his own -- as John so astutely predicted it was all he needed to do -- but I thought Bush was so weak that Kerry could have skewered him even more.

Bush, of course, was bad. He looked like Alfred E. Neuman of Mad magazine, sounded petulant, gulped down water, struck his fist on the podium in a very annoying way, and -- though few have mentioned it in the general media -- he had NUMEROUS deer in the headlight moments where he couldn't think of what to say, lost his train of thought, got confused, and so on. All par for the course for Bush, naturally.

But he gave so many openings that Kerry didn't exploit. I cackled with glee at times when Bush said stuff and then was disappointed Kerry didn't dive in. My main complaint is that Kerry spent too much time on the issues, too much time defining himself instead of going after Bush. This election is about Bush and the (terrible) job he's done. Kerry should pound away at the mistakes of Bush, not waste time define himself ("I was not misleading..." Oy!) or explaining what he'd do. Just show again and again how Bush has made a mess of things.

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