

FINAL PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

GOP braces for headache as Trump says may not accept election results

By **JOSH LEDERMAN**
and **JULIE PACE**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump launched into the campaign's closing stretch with a shot across the bow to American democratic tradition: He may reject the election's results if he loses. As Democrats pounced, Republicans braced for a fresh political headache with less than three weeks left until Election Day.

Trump's alarming rejoinder about accepting the results — "I will tell you at the time" — sent shockwaves through the presidential campaign, with Trump's supporters struggling to explain his remarks and fellow Republicans seeking even more distance from their own nominee. The distraction deprived Trump of the comeback moment he sorely needed, despite an otherwise mostly measured and poised performance in Wednesday's third and final debate.

"I will keep you in suspense," Trump said ominously when asked whether he was committed to upholding America's centuries-old tradition of the election's loser conceding. He repeated unfounded allegations of impending, widespread voter fraud.

The Republican National Committee, whose chief mission is to get the GOP nominee elected, was put in the remarkable position of disputing its own candidate, with a spokesman saying the party would "respect the will of the people." Even some of Trump's most ardent supporters felt it was a step over the line. Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee said it was "imperative that Donald Trump clearly state" he'll accept the results.

Trump running mate Mike Pence and campaign manager Kellyanne Conway, both of whom had previously insisted Trump would accept the election's results, were left trying to explain that Trump would contest the results only under extraordinary circumstances — assurances that seemed at odds with Trump's own words.

"He just wants a fair shot," Conway said on ABC's "Good Morning America." "If you're Donald Trump, you don't get a fair shot these days."

From calm to bitter

Trump's noncommittal answer was the can't-turn-away moment of the debate, which began calm and policy-focused, but devolved into a bitter confrontation. Trump called Clinton a "nasty woman," backed Supreme Court justices who would overturn the landmark Roe vs. Wade abortion rights ruling, and declined to back the intelligence community's assessment that Russia was behind recent hacking. Clinton described Trump as a "puppet" of Russian President Vladimir Putin.



Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump is surrounded by members of his family after the third presidential debate at UNLV in Las Vegas, Wednesday.



Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton debates Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump during the third presidential debate at UNLV in Las Vegas, Wednesday.

All that was overshadowed by Trump's stunner about the election's results, which marked the culmination of weeks of escalating assertions that "this election is rigged" against him and that Clinton was trying "to steal it." Trump's campaign — and even his daughter — had tried to soften his claim by insisting he was referring to unfair media treatment, leading Trump to contradict them by saying that no, he was referring to actual fraud.

There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud. U.S. elections are run by local elected officials — Republicans, in many of the most competitive states — and many of those officials have denied and denounced Trump's charges.

But Trump's campaign pointed to Al Gore and George W. Bush in 2000 as Exhibit A for why it would be premature for Trump to say he'd acquiesce on Nov. 8. Yet that election, which played out for weeks until the Supreme Court weighed in, didn't center on allegations of fraud, but on proper vote-counting after an extremely close outcome in the pivotal state of Florida led to a mandatory recount.

"Donald is still going to whine if he loses, but if the mandate is clear, I don't think many people will follow him," Clinton running mate Tim Kaine predicted Thursday on CNN.

Republicans were once

again straining to prevent Trump's rebelliousness from damaging the party's other candidates. Republicans are increasingly concerned that Trump is squandering their chances for holding onto the Senate and that the GOP could suffer heavy losses in the House.

The silence emanating from the Republican establishment said it all: House Speaker Paul Ryan's office didn't respond to requests for comment about Trump's threat, while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's office said he "typically only comments on the Senate and not the presidential race."

Democrat response

Yet Democrats wasted no time before vowing to force every GOP candidate to answer for Trump's comments. In one of the most competitive Senate races, in New Hampshire, Democrat Maggie Hassan said opponent Sen. Kelly Ayotte bore responsibility for Trump's "reckless actions," even though Ayotte rescinded her support after video emerged of Trump's sexually aggressive comments about women.

"The voters are going to decide this election, and Donald Trump needs to accept the outcome," Ayotte said Thursday, rebuking her party's nominee.

Refusing to accept the outcome would thrust the U.S. into uncharted territory. Free

and fair elections and peaceful handovers of power have underpinned America's democracy.

For election officials, there's another serious concern: that Trump's loose, unfounded talk about fraud could lead to voter intimidation. Trump has been encouraging his supporters to "monitor" voting on Election Day, particularly in urban areas like Philadelphia with large numbers of African-American voters.

Trump is trailing Clinton in nearly all battleground states. Though his answer on the election results won't likely alienate core supporters who have driven his campaign, it was equally unlikely to help draw in additional voters whose support Trump sorely needs.

In the debate, the candidates clashed repeatedly over their drastically different visions, and on their personal character. Trump offered fresh denials of sexual assault accusations by a string of women, saying the women coming forward "either want fame or her campaign did it." He falsely said the women's allegations had been debunked.

Clinton said Trump "thinks belittling women makes him bigger. He goes after their dignity, their self-worth." She avoided answering a question about her husband's infidelities.

The candidates will have at least one more run-in when they sit just one seat apart Thursday at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation Dinner, a white-tie gala in which candidates, in contrast to this year's brutal race, are expected to be light-hearted and funny.



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump supporters Mary Claire, from left, Colette McDonald and Karolee McLaughlin, with her dog Lakota, spar with protesters during an appearance by Donald Trump Jr., a son of presidential candidate Donald Trump, in Boulder, Colo.

Cheer up, Americans, say Canadians — you're great

By **MARK KENNEDY**
AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK — America's neighbors to the north — so often the butt of their jokes — are taking to social media to keep spirits up in the U.S. during this divisive election season.

Using the hashtag #tellamericaitsgreat, Canadians have swamped Twitter with compliments about American music, culture, technology and even tailgating. The outpouring of love triggered a reply — #TellCanadaThanks.

It's all an effort started by the Toronto-based ad agency The Garden Collective, which chose its hashtag as a play on Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America great again." The firm's video launching the social media push has gotten over 752,000 YouTube views and the hashtag has been trending on Twitter for several days.

"As their closest friends and neighbors, we thought it was important for us to do something to cut through the negativity and help remind them that no matter how bad things might seem, there are

a lot of reasons to believe that America is still pretty great," the agency said in a statement.

Some of the things Canadians say they admire about America are its federal parks, its diversity, its missions to Mars, jazz and Tupac Shakur. One Canadian from Halifax on Tuesday complimented Americans for baseball, "The Cather in the Rye" and first lady Michelle Obama.

Canadians, who have long been mocked by their southern neighbors for their accents ("about"), their creation of Justin Bieber and an apparent abundance of moose, have enjoyed some good press recently, largely thanks to their telegenic new prime minister, Justin Trudeau.

Americans, meanwhile, have been in the doldrums as Trump and Hillary Clinton face accusations of running a squalid campaign for presidency, not to mention several dispiriting Hollywood breakups, including the demise of Brangelina. The land that gave the world Ryan Gosling has proven as seemingly warm and kind as that sensitive actor in America's time of need.

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In a five-day special report, **The Daily Astorian** describes the problem and search for housing solutions through the eyes of professionals, developers, homeowners and renters.

The shortage of housing options affects:

- All income levels
- All ages
- All walks of life
- All areas

MONDAY: Overview of the issues county-wide

TUESDAY: Astoria

WEDNESDAY: Warrenton

THURSDAY: South County

FRIDAY: County and rural areas

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VOTING OPENS NOV. 3RD AT 7PM

R.I.P. VOTING CLOSING NOV. 6TH

WINNERS ANNOUNCED NOV. 9TH