

Here is a quick summary of the Democratic primary battle as of this morning:

In the primaries/caucuses before yesterday, Obama had secured 70 delegates vs. Clinton's 57. But Hillary had 193 "superdelegates" pledged vs. 106 for Obama. So despite Obama having "won" more delegates, Clinton was leading 250 to 176.

[Note on "superdelegates": The 2008 Democratic National Convention, where the Democratic presidential ticket is formally agreed upon, has 796 superdelegates (although the number is not final until March 1, 2008). Those superdelegates include all Democratic members of the United States Congress, Democratic governors, various additional elected officials, as well as members of the Democratic National Committee. But, note, even "pledged" superdelegates are not locked in and can always change their minds.]

Here is how the states sorted out last night. Obama won 13 states and Hillary won 8 (with New Mexico still too close to call -- about 100 votes separates the two candidates without counting something like 16,000 provisional ballots). Here are the states won by each.

Obama

Alabama
Alaska
Colorado
Connecticut
Delaware
Georgia
Hawaii
Idaho
Illinois
Kansas
Minnesota
Missouri
North Dakota

Clinton

Arizona
Arkansas
Massachusetts
New Jersey
New York
Oklahoma
Tennessee
Utah

But, apart from bragging rights, it is the delegates that matter. And that's where it gets complicated

The delegate count from last night is not final, and everyone seems to have a different

count. Last time I checked: Obama's camp [claims](#) he got 847 to 834 for Clinton. NBC was projecting a range of 840 - 849 for Obama and 829 - 838 for Clinton. I don't know of anyone (not even the Clinton camp) who is claiming she will have gotten more delegates from yesterday's voting.

In addition, I've seen reports this morning showing the current superdelegate count at: 201 for Clinton vs. 110 for Obama.

So that puts the total delegate count to date at ... who knows. Obama is almost certainly ahead in delegates awarded from the primaries and caucuses to date (a fact that seems to be little remarked upon in the media). Clinton probably has an overall lead of between 50 and 100 delegates if you count the superdelegates who have said they will support her. Despite Clinton's lead in the delegate count, I would say, on balance, it is **advantage Obama** right now. But it is close enough where an almost infinite number random events could swing it either way.

There was so much momentum for Obama going into yesterday's races that Clinton seems to have won this morning's "spin" battle just by holding on to a few key states like New York, New Jersey and California. But that overlooks the fact that Clinton had huge, double-digit leads nationally and in almost all key states only a couple of weeks ago. Given that, Obama's performance was nothing short of stunning. However, as with New Hampshire, his momentum in the last few days created such high expectations that Clinton ended up beating expectations despite a performance (coming out of Super Tuesday with fewer delegates than Obama) that would have been considered disastrous only a couple of weeks earlier. Election night results didn't reflect Obama's win in the delegate count, which didn't lend itself as well as the state "wins" to projections and early tallies. (And the lazy media has trouble getting beyond the state-by-state vote tallies.) Alas, "spin" does matter.

Obama also has more money than Clinton (having raised \$32 million in January – at least twice as much as Clinton – more on that below). And at least for the rest of February, the schedule seems to favor Obama. Here's a partial list of what's next up:

February 9

Louisiana (primary)
Washington State (caucus)
Nebraska (caucus)

February 10

Maine (caucus)

February 12

DC (primary)
Maryland (primary)
Virginia (primary)

February 19

Wisconsin (primary)

March 4

(all primaries)

Ohio

Texas

Rhode Island

Vermont

April 22

Pennsylvania (primary)

State polls have been all over the place this season. Even right up to the day of the vote, a lot of the polling has been way off. So I won't try to handicap any of these state races. (Except to say, I think Obama will do well for the rest of February, but Ohio and Pennsylvania probably favor Clinton because of their heavy blue-collar and unionized vote.) In any event, given the Democrats proportional awarding of delegates, it is unlikely that either Obama or Clinton will open up a lead in the delegate count that is greater than the 796 superdelegates (or even the 500 or so "un-pledged" superdelegates). If I had to bet, I would put the odds on Obama "winning" more delegates than Clinton between now and the convention. And a lot of the superdelegates will probably follow the lead of voters in their respective states. Still, if it comes down to the superdelegates deciding this thing, that is the kind of insider game that I would expect the Clintons to play well.

Another wild card is the Florida and Michigan delegations. As you probably know, the DNC penalized those states for not playing by the rules and moving their primaries up before Super Tuesday. The penalty is supposed to be that their delegates won't get seated at the convention. The candidates were supposed to avoid campaigning in those states, but Hillary managed to become the only candidate on the ballot in Michigan and also took the most delegates in Florida. (Ironically, those states would have ended up having more influence had they scheduled their primaries **after** Super Tuesday.) The Clintons apparently believe rules are for suckas, and they are already insisting that those delegations be seated. 185 delegates are at stake, and Clinton leads 2-to-1. Expect **very** heavy pressure from the Clinton camp and the state parties in those states. It **will** get ugly.

Imagine the outrage among Democratic voters if Obama goes in to the convention with a non-trivial, but non-decisive delegate lead only have to have the insiders tip the thing to Hillary? (That fact makes me think it is unlikely that the superdelegates will go against the primary results.) But we all know, for the Clintons it is all about **them**. If they have to destroy the party to win, there is no question what they will do. (While president, Bill Clinton's "triangulation" – positioning himself between the Republicans and his own party – tended to undermine the Democratic party even while serving him well. Similarly, had he resigned after the Lewinsky affair, Gore would have had clear sailing and an easy go of it in 2000. But, of course, he didn't.)

Finally, money may become a big factor from here on out. It is being [reported today](#) that Clinton has already loaned her campaign \$5 million in January and intends to lend it more. As I mentioned before, Obama outraised her in January by at least a 2-to-1 margin. And he tends to have a larger number of smaller donors whose donations are only for the primary race. Clinton, on the other hand, has depended more on a smaller number of

donors more of whom have maxed out for **both** the primaries and the general election. With her inevitability bubble having been burst, the special interests may keep their checkbooks in their briefcases until there is more clarity in the race. In other words, Obama has the momentum, the enthusiasm and the money. The Clintons, on the other hand, have the wiles and a powerful establishment machine. Should be tight.

There is no drama on the Republican side. Being essentially authoritarian, Republicans like to follow a strong leader and their primary system is designed to produce one ASAP. With delegates awarded on a winner-take-all basis, McCain has clear sailing ahead. The only (remote) hope for Romney or the Huckster was that the other one would fall out and the crazy base would rally behind the remaining one. Fortunately for McCain, they both still have a pulse.

It is entirely possible that the Democrats won't coalesce around a candidate until the Democratic Convention in Denver on August 25 – 28. Is that good or bad? I have no idea. With all the drama on the Democratic side, it might be hard for McCain to get much attention. But it gives the Republicans more time to heal their wounds, organize and build a war chest for the general election. But Republicans also won't know who to smear – if they use the Hillary menace to unite their party (and that is the probably the only thing that can right now) it may just have the effect of helping Obama get the nomination.

Should be interesting.