Unshackled Trump and confident Clinton to clash in final presidential debate

Latest WikiLeaks emails from Clinton camp provide ammo for Trump ahead of 3rd showdown

By Matt Kwong, CBC News  Posted: Oct 19, 2016 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Oct 19, 2016 8:45 AM ET

Generated from News Bureau press release: After Debates, Clinton’s Increased Positive Scores by College-Aged Students is Historic

Donald Trump is unshackled; Hillary Clinton looks unstoppable.

The stage is set for Wednesday’s presidential debate as Trump gets perhaps his last major shot at widening his base and Clinton looks to score a rare clean sweep in all three of their showdowns.

Fox News anchor Chris Wallace will moderate the duel at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas. It pits a newly liberated Trump, who tweeted last week about being freed from the "shackles" of the Republican establishment after party leaders deserted him, against a confident Clinton, who continues to lead in national polls despite a steady drip of WikiLeaks disclosures seized upon by political enemies as evidence of collusion.

Trump continues to fend off a flood of sexual assault allegations and criticisms that his party has abandoned him. But he’s also on the attack, demanding that Clinton take a drug test to prove she isn’t getting "pumped up" before their matchups, and accusing her team of orchestrating a mass conspiracy to have women from his past smear him as a serial sexual predator.

Clinton, meanwhile, "has a heck of a lead to blow," said Geoff Skelley, an analyst with the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics.
She's ahead of Trump in all national polls and has a 6.9-point lead, according to the RealClearPolitics average.

With that in mind, Skelley expects Trump to take a "scorched-earth" approach in the debate.

The New York real-estate magnate will likely continue to diverge from the Republican Party's top brass by blasting America's democratic process as a sham electioneered by "global elites."

Republican vice-presidential hopeful Mike Pence, left, shares Trump's view that the media are trying to manipulate the results of the election. (Mike Segar/Reuters)

"He's already inclined to do something maybe that reeks of desperation," Skelley said, recalling the town hall debate when Trump tried to get prominent seats in the audience for women who accused Clinton's husband, former president Bill Clinton, of sexual abuse.

This time around, Trump will bring the president's Kenyan-born half-brother Malik Obama as his guest. Malik reportedly told the New York Post that he's "excited to be at the debate," and said: "Trump can make America great again."

At tonight's debate, "he's going to try to flummox her and try to get her off her game," Skelley said. Though that's probably not a wise strategy.

This should be the time to temper some of his bluster and show voters a more presidential persona, said Arizona Republican strategist Sean Noble.

"If he comes in prepared, this could make for some impact on the race," Noble said. "But if 'unshackled' means he's not going to be prepared like I've seen, then this debate is going to be very bad for him."

Clinton needs to keep cool

All Clinton needs to do at this point, Noble said, is keep her cool, play a cautious game and avoid unforced errors.

Trump, on the other hand, "needs to have a strong grasp of the facts and stay disciplined."

"But I don't expect he'll do what I suggest," Noble said.
Debate coaches expect "emails" will be a popular word in Trump's attacks. But not just about Clinton's admitted misuse of classified materials on her private email server while she was secretary of state.

The whistleblowing organization WikiLeaks has been publishing daily batches of emails stolen by suspected Russian hackers from the personal Gmail account of Clinton's campaign chairman John Podesta. Included are excerpts from Clinton's paid speeches to Wall Street, as well as an address to a Brazilian bank in 2013 that included a line referring to her "dream" of "open trade and open borders."

"Trump's got WikiLeaks on his side, so 'emails' will definitely come up," said debate analyst Todd Graham, director of debate at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

In an increasingly ugly election cycle darkened by Trump's insistence the outcome will be "rigged" in favour of Clinton, the faintest whiff of collusion from her camp could turn toxic fast.

Trump and Clinton shake hands at the end of the second presidential debate at Washington University in St. Louis, Mo., on Oct. 9. (Tasos Katopodis/AFP/Getty Images)

Particularly damning could be an unverified email from Democratic National Committee interim chair Donna Brazile. The alleged email, dated March 12 and purportedly written to Clinton communications director Jennifer Palmieri, shared a draft question provided in advance of a CNN Town Hall. A similar question regarding the death penalty came up a day later at the event.

Brazile, a CNN panel contributor at the time, denies leaking any question.

But if authenticated, Graham said, the email would show an outrageous breach by Brazile. Graham imagines how Trump might use that for ammunition during the debate.

"He might say to [Clinton], 'That's a good answer, did you get that from Donna Brazile?'" Graham said.

Adding to her troubles are new FBI documents released by the bureau this week, which allege the State Department offered a "quid pro quo" deal to declassify an email on Clinton's private server. The FBI and State Department have officially denied any such offer was made.

High stakes
This being the last debate — the one that will be freshest in voters' minds as they head to polls next month — the stakes are high. Scientific polls awarded decisive wins to Clinton in the first two debates. A third win would be a feat that Graham says "almost never happens," and would force uncommitted Republicans to continue searching for a reason to vote for Trump.

"A lot of people will be hoping the debates give them their reason. Three [losses] in a row would be a big deal."

Unlike in the first debate, in which the candidates stood at podiums, or the town hall forum that allowed the candidates to roam the floor, Round 3 is expected to take place at a shared table.

Mitchell McKinney, a former consultant for the Commission on Presidential Debates, wonders whether the side-by-side arrangement might soften hostilities between the candidates.

A table debate is typically less heated because the candidates are closer to one another, he said.

"They're having a conversation, if you will. And I think that could work against Donald Trump if his strategy is to be boisterous and attack-oriented," McKinney said. "It might appear like, 'Wow, that looks inappropriate.'"

Just let Trump talk

Fox News anchor Chris Wallace debuts on Wednesday night as the channel's first moderator for a general election presidential debate. Though the network tilts conservative, pundits and journalists generally agree Wallace is even-handed and will ask tough questions of both candidates.

Trump shouldn't necessarily expect to have a friendly face at the table.

Graham, the debate coach, has advice for Clinton as well, though it may sound counterintuitive: Don't worry about talk time. A good strategy might be to let Trump speak more and expose his vulnerabilities when it comes to policy specifics.

Clinton listens as Trump speaks during their second debate. Todd Graham, director of debate at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, thinks it could be a good strategy for Clinton to let Trump do more talking during their final debate. (Reuters)
"Her answers are too darn long. She keeps talking over the moderator, and she just needs to shorten her answers," Graham said. "She can stop with extra time left and say, 'That's my position, my outlook. I'd like to ask Donald Trump what's his again?' Then see what happens."

Wednesday’s final presidential debate begins at 9 p.m. ET and will last for 90 minutes without ad breaks.

**MU staff voice concerns about lack of pay raises**

COLUMBIA – **MU staff gathered Tuesday to get answers from a panel of chancellors about pay increases.**

The Staff Advisory Council put on the forum to give staff a direct way to question administrators. Staff members sent in questions via email or asked them in person, and many of those questions were about funding available for raises.

Rhonda Gibler, Vice Chancellor of Finance, said there's no simple solution.

“The number one thing we spend our money on are the people,” Gibler said. “There’s a lot of concern about the cost of higher education, and so there isn’t an ability for us to just increase the price every year by enough to give everybody a raise.”

Chrissy Kintner, Staff Advisory Council chair, said she thinks the university is doing the best it can pay staff fairly.

“If there was a magic pot of money, of course that would be fantastic,” she said, “but I think we’re doing the best with what we can to be mindful with our resources and to highlight the good that we bring.”
The panel included Vice Chancellor for Human Researches Patty Haberberger, Vice Chancellor for Operations Gary Ward, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs and Title IX Administrator Ellen Eardley.

Kintner said open forums like this one allow staff to have a direct voice with the administration.

“More often than not, people just don’t feel like they’ve been heard, and even if the answer isn’t what you want to hear,” she said, “to know that you have a way to ask and to be listened to is very important.”