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Rivals' Finishing Touches

By Dan Janison
STAFF WRITER

In his final face-to-face shot at Mark Green yesterday, billionaire Michael Bloomberg battled to come off as the no-nonsense realist, while Green tried to project better knowledge of the city's communities.

Their success was, well, limited.

Green, the public advocate and front-runner in the race, peppered his replies to questions on city problems with references to specific projects and facts from communities around the city — activity at the Hunts Point markets in the Bronx, the structure of a Brooklyn school's bilingual program, plans for Downtown Brooklyn, demands for a school in Kingsbridge. He also cited statistics showing asthma rates among poor children being way above those of wealthier kids.

But in his bid to be pithy, he also committed two gaffes — once when he referred to a city neighborhood as Bay Shore (which is in Suffolk County) and once when he referred to Sikhs, a community from south Asia hit by recent bias incidents, as "Sheeks" rather than the proper "Seeks."

ANALYSIS

Bloomberg, the Republican, was fighting to present himself as the more practical man. For example, he said financial services probably won't be the industry moving to a fixed-up lower Manhattan, that the federal government isn't willing to help with the city's job problem, that people have to be forced onto mass transit and class-size reductions and major municipal pay raises don't seem feasible for now.

His argument, as it's evolved, seemed to be that partisanship should be shunned in selecting a mayor who will have to manage a big crisis. That's somewhat predictable given the huge Democratic majority of city voters.

But Green came ready to knock him off-balance by quoting the book "Bloomberg by Bloomberg" in which the media mogul (formerly a Democrat) said he'd give money to Democrats over even more qualified Republicans. He pounded at Bloomberg's one-time statements that a rape allegation should have third-party corroboration, that sanitation workers have a more dangerous job than police and firefighters, and that domestic violence is a "quality of life" crime. Mocking the autobiography's title, Green said, "And they call ME arrogant!"

Bloomberg defended himself on those counts by saying Green was taking all the statements out of context. And he agreed Green is arrogant. To create the desired image, Bloomberg repeatedly rolled his eyes at Green's potshots. Green repeatedly gestured more broadly, however, as if to say he includes more and represents more than his novice foe.

Staff writer Jessica Kowal contributed to this story.

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