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NEW YORK TIMES, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2001

Ever-Tighter Mayoral Race Draws to a Bitter End

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

Mark Green and Michael R. Bloomberg yesterday completed the final day of a contest for mayor that both sides said had turned unexpectedly whisker-close. Mr. Bloomberg campaigned at the side of Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, whose support has proved critical to his candidacy, while Mr. Green released a harsh advertisement that recounted charges made against Mr. Bloomberg in a sexual harassment suit.

Mr. Green, clearly worried that a victory that he had once thought was inevitable was in danger of slipping away, set off on a 24-hour tour of the city and summoned some of the top names in the Democratic Party in an attempt to pull back Democratic voters who polls suggested were drifting toward his Republican opponent.

At a rally in Bryant Park on a chilly and gray autumn afternoon, a hoarse Mr. Green appeared on a stage filled with Kennedys (Edward and Robert Jr.) and a Clinton (Bill), as he sought to contrast his Democratic credentials with those of the "Republican billionaire" and "rich elitist," as Mr. Green described his rival.

Mr. Bloomberg responded with an equally energetic round-the-clock schedule, campaigning for much of the day with a smiling Mr. Giuliani. The mayor drew a bigger ovation than Mr. Bloomberg at a rally in Manhattan last night, and he was clearly aware of the extent to which his endorsement seemed to be lifting



Top, Andrea Mohin/The New York Times; above, James Estrin/The New York Times

In the final day of campaigning in the New York mayoral race yesterday, Michael R. Bloomberg had lunch with Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani at Forlini's in Little Italy. Mark Green and former President Bill Clinton shared a light moment at a rally in Bryant Park as they listened to Senator Edward M. Kennedy speak.

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Mr. Bloomberg. "There is no question that he has political momentum," Mr. Giuliani observed.

That may have been an understatement. As the candidates broadcast their last advertisements and made their final attacks and appeals for votes, a series of polls suggested that the race, which Democrats and Republicans had once thought was Mr. Green's to lose, was too close to call, with a large number of undecided voters. A poll released yesterday by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute put each man at 42 percent; a poll released by the same organization on Oct. 24 had Mr. Green 16 points ahead of Mr. Bloomberg. The margin of sampling error was plus or minus 4 percentage points.

In a city that is 5-to-1 Democratic, and in a political year that has been so unpredictable, no one yesterday was writing victory speeches for Mr. Bloomberg or political obituaries for Mr. Green. Nonetheless, officials in both campaigns were offering many of the same explanations for what had changed in the three weeks since a confident Mr. Green stood at City Hall to announce the formation of a transition committee of fiscal experts to advise him on dealing with the city's budget problems.

Most obviously, to anyone who has been near a television set or radio in recent days, Mr. Bloomberg has swamped Mr. Green with advertisements. With unlimited resources, he has managed to broadcast a positive testimonial advertisement from Mr. Giuliani and negative advertisements intended to portray Mr. Green as slick and untrustworthy, in what aides on both sides described as a lethal combination.

A nonstop effort to harness votes, with big names in tow.

At the same time, the typical route by which candidates counter paid advertisements — day-to-day news coverage — has been largely shut off to Mr. Green because of the focus on the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the anthrax scare and, on a more positive note (at least initially), the presence of the Yankees in the World Series. That has meant, aides to both candidates said, that many voters never saw a difficult stretch of days for Mr. Bloomberg on the campaign trail, in which he made mistakes that distressed even his own supporters.

Mr. Green's situation has been complicated by the fact that he found himself fighting a war on two fronts: In addition to Mr. Bloomberg on the Republican side, he was under attack by supporters of Fernando Ferrer, his rival in the Democratic primary, who were upset because Mr. Green's supporters had circulated leaflets and made telephone calls that highlighted Mr. Ferrer's endorsement by the Rev. Al Sharpton.

Mr. Ferrer was conspicuous by his absence at yesterday's traditional pre-Election Day rally, and several Democrats expressed concern that black and Hispanic voters would stay home in response to the signal sent by Mr. Ferrer's absence.

Finally, several Democrats and aides to Mr. Bloomberg said, Mr. Green did in this contest what he did in the initial days of his primary runoff with Mr. Ferrer: Lulled by polls that showed him with a comfortable lead, he did little either to try to pin down Mr. Bloomberg or aggressively define his own candidacy.

That changed dramatically yesterday. Mr. Green began broadcasting a television commercial based on a sexual harassment lawsuit filed against Mr. Bloomberg. The case was settled out of court, after Mr. Bloomberg paid the complainant an undisclosed amount of money and denied the allegations made in the complaint.

The stark Green advertisement seizes on what is perhaps the most explosive allegation: That Mr. Bloomberg told a female employee who informed him that she was pregnant to get an abortion. "Kill it! Kill it!" a stern-voiced announcer says, quoting what the woman said Mr. Bloomberg said, over disconcerting music, as the words appear in bold relief on the screen.

Mr. Green's advisers said the advertisement was intended to underscore concerns New Yorkers might have about electing someone largely unknown to City Hall, and was aimed in particular at women. In the ad, the announcer says that Mr. Bloomberg's purported remark should give pause to voters who are either in favor or opposed to abortion rights.

Mr. Bloomberg, talking to reporters in the midst of his cross-city tour, deplored the advertisement. "Mark Green has no shame and is absolutely desperate," he said. "He is a lawyer and he knows that that was an allegation.

"What we have to do is get back to talking about rebuilding and rejuvenating this city," Mr. Bloomberg

Election Day

NEW YORK

POLLS Open from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES City offices closed; federal and state open.

POST OFFICES Express Mail only; main post office on Eighth Avenue at 32nd Street is open.

BANKS Option to close.

PARKING Alternate-side parking suspended; Sunday rules in effect.

SANITATION No pickups, street cleaning or recycling.

SCHOOLS Closed.

FINANCIAL MARKETS Stock and bond markets will be open.

TRANSPORTATION New York City subways and buses will operate on a normal weekday schedule. Long Island Rail Road and Metro-North will operate on normal weekday schedules.

NEW JERSEY

POLLS Open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES State offices closed; federal offices open.

POST OFFICES Regular delivery.

BANKS Option to close.

SCHOOLS Option to close.

TRANSPORTATION New Jersey Transit buses and trains and PATH trains will run on regular weekday schedules.

CONNECTICUT

POLLS Open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES Federal, state and municipal offices open.

POST OFFICES Regular delivery.

BANKS Open.

SCHOOLS Open.

TRANSPORTATION Metro-North trains on a weekday schedule.

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Voting Information

New York City voters going to the polls today will have the opportunity to vote not only for mayor, but also for the other citywide positions on the ballot: public advocate and comptroller. In addition, there will be races in all 51 City Council districts.

There will also be elections for justices of the State Supreme Court and for judges in the Civil Court. And in Manhattan and in Brooklyn, there will be contests for district attorney. In the Bronx, there will be an election for surrogate, a judicial position.

The polls will be open from 6 a.m. until 9 p.m. Officials at the Board of Elections said that voters with questions or in need of assistance may call the office's toll-free number: 1-866-VOTE-NYC (1-866-8683-692). In addition, the New York Public Interest Research Group and Common Cause will operate a voter help line from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. today, at (212) 772-4463.

said. "And that's what the voters want to hear about."

Mr. Green defended the advertisement, noting the extent of Mr. Bloomberg's attacks on him. "If he is going to spend tens of millions of dollars saying untrue things about me, I will quote what people said under oath about what he believes and he said," Mr. Green said. "If he would have wanted to have a détente on critical ads, it would have been more than welcome. He's not going to spend $60 million and expect me to be silent in return."

Mr. Bloomberg spent the day campaigning with Mr. Giuliani and Senator John McCain of Arizona, appearing at events that seemed to be meant to win him favorable images on the evening news — eating ice cream with Mr. Giuliani at a Friendly's on Staten Island, for example — as he sought to counter Mr. Green's attempt to force this heavily Democratic city to consider the election in partisan terms.

"We are not Republicans, we are not Democrats, we are New Yorkers," he said to about 300 placard-waving supporters at an election eve rally at the Roosevelt Hotel. "I want to be able to take what Rudy has done and carry it forward."

From there, Mr. Bloomberg, the billionaire founder of Bloomberg L.P., embarked on an overnight schedule that was to take him to a bowling alley and a Home Depot.

At Bryant Park, Mr. Clinton described Mr. Green as a "good man" and sought to rally the divided party behind its nominee.

"I've been in enough elections to know that everybody vents steam, everybody wants to win, they say things sometimes they shouldn't say," Mr. Clinton said. "And I've seen a lot of these negative attacks on you. I'm telling you: He's a good man who will do a good job as mayor of the city of New York."

Mr. Green's day included a chaotic walk through Forest Hills, Queens, with Senators Joseph I. Lieberman of Connecticut and Charles E. Schumer of New York, as well as Martin Luther King III. Mr. Green's decision to campaign with those political celebrities drew a throng of television cameras, to Mr. Green's evident concern. As they walked down 71st Avenue toward Austin Street, Mr. Green called out from the middle of the scrum, "Are there any voters here?"

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