

# Media and politics

## Local press says candidate coverage thorough

By LYNN BLANCO

*"We're here, Mike, for the start of tonight's contest. Both sides are really outstanding. What do you think their chances are?"*

*"Well, Howard, the challenger is really young and not well known, so he may have a disadvantage at the outset. On the other hand, his opponent is a seasoned competitor. He'll have the definite advantage of knowing how to deal with the pressure situations that come up. But I think we have to wait and see what the play-by-play action in this arena will really be."*

*This is not the start of an athletic competition, but of a very competitive political contest.*

*The contest may still resemble a gigantic sporting event, with its winners and losers and locker-room interviews," a March 24 Newsweek article said. "But... the election coverage appears at once more restrained and more responsible than in the past."*

*The press during the 1976 presidential election was criticized for not having noticed the significance of Jimmy Carter and the Iowa caucuses. This January, journalists nationwide were determined to improve their coverage of the candidates.*

*"We're like any other institution," Lou Cannon, Washington Post Western bureau chief, told Newsweek. "We're not going to make the same mistakes we made last time."*

We're going to make whole new mistakes.

The article also stated, "In 1980, by all signs, the media will play a greater role in the presidential campaign than ever before."

Local news directors and editors agree.

Scott DeLucia, news director for KBTX-TV (Channel 3) in Bryan, said the media are more responsible now than in the past.

"In the past, we covered a news conference just because it was a news

port something just because there is a news conference."

"As the election runs down, we'll be taking a little different posture. Unless he (Caperton) comes up with anything 'earth-shattering,' the exposure on him will be diminished. Just because he calls a press conference, it doesn't mean he'll get a minute or a half a minute spot."

This problem occurs because of different candidates' campaign strategies, he said.

"The Moore-Caperton campaign is an unusual race. You have one guy that has been in office better than 30 years. If you think about it, he's been in office almost longer than Caperton has been alive.

"You have two different campaign battle plans in this election," DeLucia said.

"Moore has been friends with everyone. His time is better spent sitting across a table from his cronies, and talking about what's going on. He isn't very comfortable with news conferences and doesn't feel it's his best way to campaign."

Caperton, on the other hand, doesn't have a power base like Moore's, he said.

"He has to go on a name-identification and face-identification basis and make himself as visual

*"I don't think you should endorse someone," DeLucia said. "I'm tying myself to Joe Blow when I endorse him. And if he's a crook, then I'll be linked to a crook" — Scott DeLucia, news director for KBTX-TV.*

possible. He (Caperton) is using every means he can to make contact with the masses."

Endorsing candidates is another problem for the media.

The editorial policy at The Eagle and KBTX is not to endorse any candidates.

"It is incorrect to endorse one candidate over another," Fleischer said.

"I don't think you should endorse someone," DeLucia said. "I'm tying myself to Joe Blow when I endorse him. And if he's a crook, then I'll be linked to a crook."

Licensing is a problem television and radio share.

DeLucia said television has more restrictions than newspapers because of licensing by the federal government. Broadcast media are required by law to give equal opportunity to each candidate and must sell political advertising at the lowest rate on their advertising cards.

Leanne Wakefield, news director for WTAW radio, said voter apathy is a problem.

One solution is to make the public more aware of the candidates and their issues. Back-to-back interviews with the candidates will help, she said.

"I want the public to be aware of the candidates — what they want for the city.



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