

Premiere  
From: David Mestlin, president,  
ABC News  
Subject: Crisis  
You remember the ad slogan for  
Jaws 2: "Just when you thought it  
was safe to go back in the water  
..." Well, just when we cut a deal  
with Time Warner to guarantee  
that the Mouse ears will never go  
dark again, we have a new problem  
that will endanger our ratings dur-  
ing Sweeps Month.  
It's Clinton. He has the audacity  
to demand five minutes Sunday  
night to speak about the benefits of  
trade with China.

have to be to embarrass.  
You can see the promos: "Exclusive  
— Leonardo DiCaprio Talks Geo-  
politics. With Special Guest, Bill  
Clinton." If Leonardo's game, we  
can fly out Sam and Cokie to brief  
him on a few key concepts like  
"China's a very big country on the  
other side of the Pacific Ocean."  
While we wait to hear from Leo's  
people, do you think we should try  
to line up Julia Roberts in full Erin  
Brockovich dress as our backup?

From: Eisner  
To: The Little People at ABC

...  
From: Andrew Heyward, presi-  
dent, CBS News  
To: Whoever Owns CBS These  
Days  
Subject: Ratings Disaster Ahead  
We've got a new problem with  
60 Minutes. No, it's not another  
movie or whether to extend Mike  
Wallace's contract until he's Me-  
thusalem's age. It's the White  
House. Those greedmeisters are re-  
questing five minutes at 7 p.m.  
Sunday for some kind of Clinton

on Angel to consider. And our big ef-  
fort to reach out to younger de-  
mographics (viewers without den-  
tures) with *The Linda McCartney  
Story*.  
But I've got a great idea for a  
counterproposal to run by the  
White House. We'll offer the presi-  
dent all the time he wants Monday  
morning with Bryant Gumbel. If  
even 10 people in the White House  
tune in, our ratings have to soar.  
Walter Shapiro's column appears  
Wednesdays and Fridays. Contact  
him at wshapiro@usatoday.com

# Invigorated Bush bounces back

After faltering in February, campaign  
regains footing. But governor's team  
is maintaining combat-readiness.

By Judy Keen  
USA TODAY

EVERETT, Washington — At least  
for this moment, in a presidential  
campaign that has had some wild  
turns, life is sweet for Texas Gov.  
George W. Bush.

He finally secured Arizona Sen.  
John McCain's endorsement, he's  
leading Vice President Gore in na-  
tional polls and he's moving back  
to the political center with a series  
of proposals that sometimes put  
Gore on the defensive. Next Thurs-  
day, he could get another boost  
when he meets — and poses for the  
cameras — with retired general  
Colin Powell, probably the planet's  
most popular Republican.

It's quite a transformation from  
the dark days of February, when  
McCain was upsetting Bush in pri-  
mary elections, the Texas govern-  
or's record-setting campaign trea-  
sury cash was dwindling fast and  
some Republicans were wondering  
aloud whether he was up to the job  
of nominee. But Bush strategists  
expect tougher days ahead, and be-  
hind the scenes, they're laying the  
groundwork for a hard-fought,  
close race in the summer and fall.

"Bush has had a very good two-  
month run, but these national cam-  
paigns are like the tides: They  
come in, and they go out," says  
Scott Reed, who managed Bob  
Dole's 1996 presidential campaign.  
"Republicans need to be careful  
and cautious."

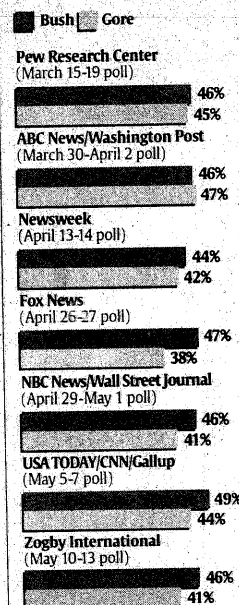
Bush and his aides are confident  
that he has regained the sure foot-  
ing that catapulted him into instant  
front-runner status last year.  
Wednesday, standing in the cav-  
ernous Boeing factory in Everett,  
Wash., where Air Force One was  
built, Bush told workers that he has  
always admired the presidential  
aircraft. "If all goes well, I promise  
not to spill any coffee" in it, he said  
with a wry smile.

Bush is a person whose moods  
are plainly etched on his face, and  
it's obvious that he believes his  
campaign has righted itself. He  
hangs out in the back of his cam-  
paign plane between stops, banter-  
ing with reporters about every-  
thing from baseball to the summer  
Olympics and whether they'll over-  
shadow the campaign.

There are more tangible signs  
that Bush has recovered from his  
primary-season wounds, some of  
which were self-inflicted. Report-

## Bush holds lead

Since Vice President Gore and Texas  
Gov. George W. Bush wrapped up  
their parties' presidential  
nominations on March 14, Bush has  
built and maintained a modest lead  
in most national polls of voters' preferences. But most poll results  
are within the margin of error,  
which is  $\pm 3$  to  $\pm 5$  percentage points:



ers have finally stopped asking  
about his visit to Bob Jones Univer-  
sity in South Carolina, which kicked  
over weeks of damaging controversy  
over the school's ban on interracial  
dating and its founder's view of Ca-  
tholicism as a "satanic cult." The  
McCain endorsement last week  
ended an awkward period during  
which the senator still seemed to  
be running against Bush.

Bush seems to have won the  
support of the conservative wing of  
his party even as he moves toward  
the center with proposals to im-  
prove education, housing and  
health care. His emphasis on those  
issues seems to be paying off; his  
support among female voters con-  
tinues to grow.

Republican campaign veterans  
say the Bush campaign seems  
well-positioned for an inevitable  
Gore offensive. "They need to store  
up as much capital with the elec-  
torate as they can, keep him out  
campaigning as much as possible  
and showcase his character," says  
Bill Dal Col, who managed Steve  
Forbes' campaign for the Republi-  
can presidential nomination.

If Gore's criticisms become  
harsher, as many political pros ex-  
pect, Bush aides say he is prepared  
to respond forcefully. They've got  
videotapes showing Gore at a  
Buddhist temple fundraiser in 1996  
that raised illegal donations. Other  
footage has Gore sticking up for  
President Clinton at a Rose Garden  
pep rally on the day of the House  
impeachment vote in 1998 and  
calling Clinton a great president. All  
those images could turn up in  
Bush's TV ads.

While Bush promotes his Social  
Security-reform proposal and is-  
sues intended to appeal to moder-  
ate and independent voters he'll  
need to beat Gore, his campaign's  
infrastructure is being assembled:  
► Bush is replenishing his cam-  
paign treasury, mostly with mail  
and phone solicitations. Since  
March 1, he has raised about \$10  
million for a campaign fund that  
had been depleted by a tougher-  
than-expected primary race.

► He's also helping other party  
organizations raise money. In the  
next month, he'll appear at 14  
fundraisers in key states, including  
Ohio, Pennsylvania, Connecticut,  
Kentucky, Florida and California.  
None of the money raised at those  
events will go to Bush's campaign.  
Instead, it will go to the state par-  
ties and to the Republican National  
Committee. But that cash will ben-  
efit Bush indirectly, because it will  
be used for get-out-the-vote cam-  
paigns and TV ads.

► The campaign is collaborating  
with the Washington-based com-  
mittees that coordinate GOP House  
and Senate races. Bush will cam-  
paign for candidates in races that  
are close, especially in the states  
where he, too, needs strong Republi-  
can turnout.

► Bush and his aides are meet-  
ing with dozens of state party lead-  
ers to plan ways to motivate voters  
with mailings, rallies, coffee parties  
and phone calls by volunteers.

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Dal Col says Bush must choreo-  
graph appearances by surrogates,  
such as GOP governors and his for-  
mer rivals for the nomination, to  
"pound away every day at Gore."

Reed says Bush must focus on six  
aspects of the campaign in order to  
maintain his lead over Gore:

► Electoral strategy. Bush must  
get 270 Electoral College votes to  
win. To do that, Reed says, he must  
be well-organized in the big, vote-  
rich states that could go either way  
and will probably decide the race.  
These states include Pennsylvania,  
Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Mis-  
souri. "At the end of the day, the  
national polls are meaningless, and  
it's those states that matter," Reed  
says.

► The convention. The themes of  
the convention that opens July 31  
in Philadelphia will set the tone for  
the fall campaign.

► Debates. Gore wants to debate  
soon and often, but Bush may hold  
off until after the conventions.  
Some party strategists believe he  
should agree to several debates be-  
cause if there are only two or three,  
the stakes will be enormous.

► A running mate. History  
shows the second person on the  
ticket doesn't affect many votes,  
but Bush's selection will influence  
how voters view him. If he chooses  
a supporter of abortion rights, such  
as Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge,  
there's sure to be an outcry from  
abortion opponents.

► California. Polls suggest Bush's  
prospects there are dim. But Bush  
allies say he must contest the state,  
which has 54 electoral votes, if only  
to ensure that Gore continues to in-  
vest time and money there at the  
expense of other battleground  
states.

► Spending. Bush needs staff in  
place in key states this summer.

"They need to make sure they  
can get it to the next gear," Dal Col  
says. "When things heat up, they  
need to be prepared."

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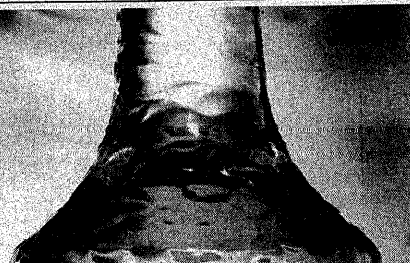
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