

Told you so: Reality 'Trumps' the pundits in debate

by Kenneth R. Timmerman

The pundits had given up Donald Trump for lost.

Republicans were bailing on him. Women were turned off. Why, even his vice presidential pick, Mike Pence, was so disgusted he was on the verge of ditching the campaign (not).

While it's certainly true that weasel [Republicans were jumping ship](#), the rest showed the true colors of the punditocracy: they were taking a victory lap for their candidate, trying ever so desperately to convince themselves that their dreams of a Hillary Clinton presidency had become reality.

While by no means the worst, CBS "Face the Nation" anchor John Dickerson thought the elite media had found their ultimate "gotcha" moment. In his grilling of Trump surrogate Rudy Giuliani on Sunday morning, Dickerson [tried eight ways](#) of turning that dead fish in the fire.

He did the same in the spin room after the debate – but with increasing desperation. Donald Trump had nailed it. And Dickerson and his fellow pro-Hillary pundits couldn't believe what they had just witnessed.

Pollster Frank Luntz – who had been touting the "Dump Trump" Republicans just 24 hours before the debate – had the presence of mind at least to face reality.

He convened a focus group of 30 undecided voters to watch Sunday's debate, and [reads as disjointed](#) because Raddatz was trying to talk over Trump as he answered her question. Which in the end he did, calmly and rationally.

This was the performance Trump supporters have been waiting

for since the primaries. How many times have I heard at Trump rallies or even in casual encounters with voters who were not die-hard Republicans, "I can hardly wait to watch Donald Trump demolish Hillary in a one-on-one debate."

That's exactly what Americans witnessed on Sunday night.

When Hillary lied about her secret Wall Street speeches, trying to explain away her belief that presidents should have a "public" and a "private" policy as admiration for Abraham Lincoln, Trump called her out. "Honest Abe never lied," he said. "That's the big difference between Abraham Lincoln and you."

He pivoted again when the moderators tried to go after him for a 3 a.m. tweet about a former Miss Universe to Hillary's 3 a.m. moment – when she failed to answer the call from U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens, under attack in Benghazi.

Like most of the networks, the CNN pundits' panel spanned the full political spectrum of Trump-haters. In