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ELECTIONS '20 | PRESIDENT

Debates could make or break O'Rourke, Castro

Texans need strong showings in second round, analysts say

By GROMER JEFFERS JR. Political Writer gjeffers@dallasnews.com

Julián Castro and Beto O'Rourke will attempt to reverse the trajectory of their fledgling presidential cam-

paigns as Democrats stage their second presidential primary debates this week.

This time, the two men are slated to participate on separate nights, and the outcome could boost or break either or both.

O'Rourke, the former El Paso congressman, is hoping to rebound Tuesday night from a bad performance in the first round of forums. In Miami,

Castro, the former San Antonio mayor, mauled him during an exchange over whether to make illegal entry into the country a criminal or civil violation.

Though Castro, who will debate Wednesday, enjoyed an initial surge in fundraising after that debate, he remains buried in most polls at around 1%. That's off the pace needed to get a critical invite to the next round

of debates in September at Texas Southern University in Houston.

Analysts say Castro and O'Rourke, particularly the latter, must command the stage and somehow connect with Democrats watching live on television or catching up through the later news coverage.

Texas was the home of Dem-

ocratic political legends like Lyndon B. Johnson, Ann Richards, Lloyd Bentsen and Barbara Jordan. Slogans indicative of the state's bravado include "Don't mess with Texas," "Texans don't run from a fight, they run to the fight" and "Texas is a blend of valor and swagger."

O'Rourke and Castro haven't

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How to watch

The top 20 contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination will square off in a second round of two debates — 10 on Tuesday and 10 on Wednesday — at 7 p.m. in Detroit. Here's where to watch:

TV: CNN, CNN International and CNN en Español

Online: CNN.com, CNN apps

KELLER



Shaban Athuman/Staff Photographer

Hilda "Tinker" Rautenberg rarely brings out her tattered, overflowing scrapbooks of news clippings and black-and-white photos from her years as a member of the Moonmaids, but every once in a while she breaks into song, reminded of one of the many ditties they sang.

Medley of memories



Big band singer opens up about her adventures on the road

By MARC RAMIREZ Staff Writer mramirez@dallasnews.com

At 91, Hilda "Tinker" Rautenberg doesn't make a big production of her storied past. Still, she might occasionally break into song, reminded of a ditty or two she sang as a member of the Moonmaids, who did vocals for popular big band

leader Vaughn Monroe in the late 1940s.

Born Hilda Cunningham, Rautenberg had just started at North Texas State Teachers College — now the University of North Texas — when she and three fellow students formed a collegiate quartet. Several lucky breaks put them in the spotlight and then on Monroe's

national circuit, where they met stars like Frank Sinatra, Patti Page and Rosemary Clooney and appeared in the 1947 film Carnegie Hall.

Only rarely now does Rautenberg bring out her tattered, overflowing scrapbooks of news clippings and black-and-white photos of big band concerts, fancy banquets, beach

frolics and life on the road.

"I really don't tell people," she said recently at Mustang Creek Estates in Keller, the senior community where she now lives.

The keepsakes sometimes surprise the staff and residents.

"When I found out who she

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TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Intel director leaving position

President says he'll nominate Rep. Ratcliffe of Heath for job

FROM WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON — Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats will leave his position next month, President Donald Trump announced Sunday, capping a tumultuous relationship in which the two were often at odds over the wisdom of negotiating with Russia, the status of Iran's nuclear weapons program and the severity of foreign threats to U.S. elections.

Trump said in a tweet that he would nominate U.S. Rep. John Ratcliffe of Heath, a three-term Republican congressman and prominent Trump supporter, to replace Coats.

Coats repeatedly disagreed with Trump on key national security claims for over two years, and his imminent departure has been talked about for several months.

By contrast, Ratcliffe is seen as a rising star. The 53-year-old played a prominent role in last week's House hearing with Robert Mueller, when the third-term lawmaker tore into the former special counsel as having violated "every principle and the most sacred traditions" of prosecutors by including in his report "potential crimes that were not charged."

Interviewed Sunday on the Fox News Channel, Ratcliffe suggested he thought the special counsel's probe of Trump sprang from a plot to frame Trump originated by the administration of former President Barack Obama.

"They accused Donald Trump of a crime, and then they try and reverse-engineer a process to justify that accusation," Ratcliffe said on Sunday Morning Futures.



DAN COATS

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Scattered storms



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Metro, back page

INSIDE

Table with 4 columns: Category, Page, Category, Page. Includes Lottery, Nation, World, Editorials, Viewpoints, Autos.

NATION

Town on edge over Area 51 event

The residents of Rachel, the tiny Nevada town gaining celebrity status because of the "storm Area 51" event, are apprehensive about what might happen if big crowds actually do arrive. "It's a little scary to think that many people could descend on a town of 54," one said. 3A

Verbal hit on city defended

The acting White House chief of staff on Sunday defended President Donald Trump's attacks on the city of Baltimore and Rep. Elijah Cummings, saying that some people take offense to anything the president says. 2A

Also: Fitness trackers are good for your health, but is the 10,000-step goal overblown? 3A

LATE SCORES

For results from last night's games, go to sportsdayfw.com/scores.

SPORTSDAY

'I just want to coach,' Briles says

Former Baylor coach Art Briles said Sunday that he is returning to coaching football at Mount Vernon High School because coaching "is what I do." 1C

METRO

Judge cites 'need of protection'

Throwing a minor into the adult justice system is seen as a last resort. But in 16-year-old Lenario Washington's case last week, a judge made an exception. 1B

MIDDLE EAST

Diplomats recommit to saving Iran nuclear deal

Fate of the accord still uncertain after U.S. withdrawal and sanctions

FROM WIRE REPORTS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's deputy foreign minister said Sunday that an emergency meeting in Vienna between Tehran and its partners in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal had yielded positive developments but had not "resolved everything."

"The atmosphere was constructive, and the discussions were good," Seyed Abbas Araghchi told reporters after the meeting ended.

"I cannot say that we resolved everything" but all the parties are still "determined to save this deal," he added.

Fu Cong, the head of the Chinese delegation, said that while there were "some tense moments" during the

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Big band singer low-key about her past

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was, I was, like, 'Oh my God,'” said La’Fonda “KK” Mathis, an activity director at the community. “We didn’t know who we were taking care of.”

Those years were a dream come true for a girl from Denton who’d sung since third grade, earning the nickname “Tinker” as a toddler for her habit of getting into things. She and schoolmates Mary Jo Thomas, Arline Truax and Katie Myatt loved big bands and their vocal groups, catching shows when they came to town and practicing their own arrangements. By 1943, the four had formed the North Texas Swingtet.

A talent show victory the next year put them onstage at Dallas’ Majestic Theatre — and helped land them a national United Service Organizations tour gig performing in hospital wards.

“It was our first inkling that maybe we’d like to do this as a career,” Rautenberg said.

One night, they drove to Lake Worth to see bandleader Stan Kenton, who graciously agreed after the show to listen to them sing. Also there was a writer for *Band Leaders* magazine, who was trailing Kenton for a profile and said he knew of someone who needed a vocal group: Monroe, the deep-voiced crooner whose existing quartet was disbanding.

As one academic journal noted, Monroe’s low voice earned him monikers like “the baritone with muscles in his throat” and “the voice with hair on its chest.” Known for classics like “Riders in the Sky” and “Let It Snow,” he was among post-WWII singers like Sinatra and Bing Crosby who embraced slow, romantic love songs over the hot jazz sounds that preceded them.

Hearing their demo, Mon-



Shaban Athuman/Staff Photographer

Hilda “Tinker” Rautenberg held a picture of the Moonmaids’ USO trip. She had many adventures while on the road with bandleader Vaughn Monroe in the 1940s, including meeting stars like Frank Sinatra, Patti Page and Rosemary Clooney.

roe hired the singers sight unseen and sent them two dozen arrangements to practice. They flew to New York in March 1946, and he renamed them the Moonmaids — a nod to his signature tune, “Racing With the Moon.”

“We had no idea our boss was so popular,” Rautenberg said. “But he was a good family man, which we all appreciated.”

One of Monroe’s former singers stayed on with the group, showing the fledgling vocalists, who Monroe called his “Texas kids,” the ropes of big band performance and being on the road.

“She took charge of us,” Rautenberg said. “We had to get gowns and suits fitted.

She’d say, ‘Run off the stage quick because Vaughn’s going to ask for a curtain call.’ But we were ready for the challenge.”

There were flubs. Once, Rautenberg and another Moonmaid were backstage playing cards when they heard a song intro onstage, where they were supposed to be.

“We were so apologetic,” she said. “It never happened again, and Vaughn forgave us.”

Being in the national spotlight meant a life constantly on the move.

“You learned to be organized, to carry your necessities, to not worry about getting your clothes clean if you couldn’t,” Rautenberg recalled. “You learned to make the best of it. You would be so tired that you

could fall asleep on the make-up table. The buses were drafty, and you were at the mercy of wherever you stopped for the bathroom.”

Still in their late teens, they lugged their own bags full of cumbersome costumes and cowboy boots on and off the bus. Musical equipment rode in a separate truck, while Monroe flew his own private plane.

Occasional flat tires prompted impromptu picnics or penny-pitching sessions against a curb, but it was one day in 1948 that stands out: The Moonmaids and band members were half-asleep en route to a show in West Virginia when someone shouted, “There’s smoke coming out of the floor!”

The driver pulled over and they scurried off the flaming bus, grabbing whatever was closest at hand. “I took my bag, but left my cashmere coat,” Rautenberg lamented. “We just stood on the side of the road, watching it burn.”

Still, the show would go on. The fire was eventually blamed on overheated brakes.

By 1950, the “Texas girls” had tired of the constant touring, and besides, they’d promised their parents they’d return to finish school.

In her early 20s, Rautenberg returned to Denton to finish her studies and met her future husband, Bill Rautenberg, on a blind date. They married in July 1951, and he enjoyed a 30-year career as a Dr Pepper

executive while she found gigs doing commercial and radio station identification jingles, just happy to sing again.

Fellow Moonmaids followed similar paths, and as years passed some periodically reunited for benefits and other shows. “We sang in nursing homes, Rotary Clubs, anybody who wanted to hear us,” Rautenberg said.

These days, only two other Moonmaids remain — Thomas, who lives in Dallas, and June Bratone, who’d joined after one original member left and now lives in College Station. Rautenberg sees them only occasionally.

Her husband died in 2004, and she’s been a beloved member of the Mustang Creek community since early last year.

“Tinker radiates happiness everywhere she goes,” said Candy Jiwa, the community’s executive director.

Rautenberg’s fingers are barely strong enough to forge a solid guitar chord anymore, the calluses of regular friction long gone. But that doesn’t stop her from periodically doing what brings her joy. One morning, she retrieved her instrument and played one of her old favorites: “Try to Remember,” from the musical *The Fantasticks*.

Try to remember when life was so tender

When dreams were kept beside your pillow.

Try to remember when life was so tender

When love was an ember about to billow.

Afterward, seeing the scrapbooks spread on the table, a facility staff member told her, “It’s an honor to meet you.”

Rautenberg smiled.

“I’m just a normal person, like anybody else,” she said. “I’m old. But I had a fun career.”

Twitter: @typewriterninja

Texans have scant room for error in Dem debates

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lived up to that.

“When you think of Texas, you think of words like *outsized* and *dominant*,” said Aaron Kall, director of debate at the University of Michigan. “Maybe their personalities don’t fit that mode. A little more swagger, personality and confidence could help.”

Jane Hamilton, a former chief of staff for Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Fort Worth, and a board member of the progressive group Annie’s List, said the Texans have to show they can slug it out with President Donald Trump.

“Beto and Julián don’t have to prove that they are smart enough, but they need to demonstrate that they are tough enough to take a roundhouse from Donald Trump and deliver back an even harder blow,” she said.

Eric Cedillo, a Dallas lawyer who has worked with both Texans, says he expects O’Rourke to rebound and Castro to have another good performance.

“Both of them have a tough row to hoe,” Cedillo said. “O’Rourke will be able to show a moderate appeal. He won’t get attacked by Castro this time.”

The stakes for Castro are even more critical.

“Castro has to get his poll numbers up, or he’s not in the third debate,” Cedillo said.

Quest for a comeback

O’Rourke rode into the presidential contest after losing to incumbent Republican Sen. Ted Cruz by a margin of 2.6 percentage points, a race that made him a national sensation.

But after he launched his presidential bid, his campaign lost momentum, including a disastrous debate performance in which he struggled to crisply answer questions and appeared stunned when Castro said he needed to do his homework.

O’Rourke has a history of lackluster debate performances. He struggled during his first debate against Cruz but rebounded when the two faced off several weeks later.

Now O’Rourke needs another comeback, but this time just to stay relevant.



John Bazemore/The Associated Press

Beto O’Rourke’s campaign has lost momentum, partially due to a disastrous debate performance in which he struggled to crisply answer questions and appeared stunned by Julián Castro.

“Beto needs to define himself more to the world of Democratic voters,” said Kelly Dietrich, founder of a candidate training group called the National Democratic Training Committee. “Who is Beto? Why is he running?”

Dietrich said O’Rourke could answer those questions, though rebounding will be tough.

“Trying to convince voters to give you a second glance and change their minds is more difficult,” he said.

But Dietrich and others say O’Rourke has the talent to turn it around.

Simple changes, like the way he answers questions, will help.

“He showed in his second debate against Cruz that he can rebound,” said Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, who worked on Barack Obama’s presidential campaign. “He’s got to get the attention on him. ... He needs to give direct answers to questions before pivoting to a broader message.”

Jenkins said it’s important for O’Rourke and Castro to show toughness.

“Democrats want someone who is in command and control and capable of beating Donald Trump,” Jenkins said.

Castro needs another strong performance to raise his profile and be rele-

AT A GLANCE Debate lineups

TUESDAY

From the top tier: Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders

From the middle tier: Beto O’Rourke, Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar

From the lowest tier: Marianne Williamson, John Delaney, John Hickenlooper, Tim Ryan and Steve Bullock

vant when the field is winnowed.

The former U.S. housing secretary has command of the issues, analysts say. But voters still don’t know him.

Targeting Biden?

Kall said Castro was lucky to be staged with former Vice President Joe Biden, the front-runner who stumbled during the first debate. That’s when California Sen. Kamala Harris challenged his 1970s-era stand on school busing. Harris is also featured on the final night, and many of Biden’s rivals will take aim at him, hoping for an attention-grabbing moment.

“Being on the second night is essential because that debate gets more attention,” Kall said. “Castro has as good a chance as Kamala Harris to have that kind of moment.”



Carlos Osorio/The Associated Press

Former San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro, as well as O’Rourke, could use “a little more swagger, personality and confidence,” said Aaron Kall, director of debate at the University of Michigan.

feel pressure to meet expectations.

“A poor performance here and you have to wait two months to redeem yourself,” Kall said.

Dietrich, a veteran Democratic consultant, said it will be interesting to see which of the lower-tier candidates, if any, gain traction.

To illustrate how big the Democratic field is, long-shot candidates Andrew Yang, a businessman, and Sen. Michael Bennet of Colorado are having a pre-fight beef.

Yang announced that he would be attacking Bennet at the debate, which is more notice than Castro gave O’Rourke.

“What did Bennet do to Yang?” Dietrich joked. “I want to know.”

Attack lines aside, analysts say O’Rourke and Castro should be wary of joining the parade of candidates moving to the left.

“They need to avoid talking about any issue in broad ideological terms that leaves them just another in a group of second-tier Democrats fighting for liberal votes,” Hamilton said. “They need to break down positions on issues like health care and immigration and justice reform into the specific ways that affect individual lives.”

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