

Dean opts out of media blitz

Democrats launch efforts in Missouri

By STEVE KRASKE
The Kansas City Star

The TV ad campaign is off and running in Missouri, with Democrats John Kerry and John Edwards flashing the best of their biographies.

But one candidate remained conspicuously absent Thursday — Howard Dean. The one-time Democratic front-runner stayed dark in Missouri and six other states that will hold presidential caucuses.

Democrats nominating caucus Tuesday in the wake of a major campaign shakeup. Dean has adopted a new strategy that conserves cash and places more emphasis on states farther down the campaign calendar. On Thursday, Dean visited one of those states, Michigan, which will hold its 128-delegate primary on Feb. 7.

Today he will make his first Missouri stop of 2004 in St. Louis to talk about the Bush administration's education policies.

Dean said he hoped to pick up as many delegates as he could on Tuesday, including a chunk of Missouri's 74. But finishing first in

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any of the seven states is no longer a campaign imperative, he said. "We're going to have to win eventually," said Dean, who finished a disappointing third in Iowa and second in New Hampshire. "But the question was, Do we have to win Feb. 3? Of course we want to, but we don't have to."

That's a dramatic change since the days before the Iowa caucuses, when the Dean camp was planning a full-scale Missouri offensive if he won Iowa.

When Dean was soaring high last summer, Dick King, his Missouri campaign chairman, boasted that the former Vermont governor was primed to upset St. Louis congressman Richard Gephardt in his home state.

On Thursday, King talked of different expectations. "Realistically, I'll be pleased if we come in second or third," he said.

In other campaign developments Thursday: ■ John Kerry, the senator from Massachusetts who has emerged as the new front-runner, announced that he would hold a Kansas City campaign rally at 9:30 a.m. Saturday at the Muehlebach Hotel, 1213 Wyandotte St.

Kerry's wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, is scheduled to attend a Kansas City fund-raiser on Monday.

■ Kerry picked up endorsements from Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes and City Councilman Troy Nash.

"I've been very impressed with how his campaign has evolved," Barnes said.

■ Edwards, who made campaign stops in Springfield and St. Louis on Wednesday, announced endorsements from 36 state lawmakers, a majority of the Democratic caucus. The lawmakers included several from the Kansas City area: Reps. Marsha Campbell, John Burnett and Dan Bishop.

■ Several campaigns said they had embarked on direct-mail and phone banking operations aimed at spurring voters to turn up at the polls Tuesday.

Dean wasn't the only candidate who appeared to be stopping short of a full commitment in Missouri. Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and retired Gen. Wesley Clark, who hails from next-door Arkansas, had yet to buy any TV ad time or announce planned visits.

The Clark campaign in Missouri said it was working to bring the general to the state this weekend.

First glance

■ Howard Dean has chosen not to buy TV ads in any of the seven states holding primary or caucus contests on Tuesday.

■ Dean says he doesn't have to win any of those states, including Missouri, and instead will focus on states farther down the primary calendar.

and possibly to Kansas City. "I know he's coming here," said Angela Kyle, Clark's Kansas City area coordinator. "That's all they've been able to tell me."

Dean's new strategy suggests that he has scrapped his early plan to win the nomination quickly and is prepared to run a marathon race in which he gradually picks up enough delegates to win the nomination. Under Democratic rules, delegates are awarded on a proportional basis based on the percentage of the vote a candidate wins. A candidate must win at least 15 percent support in a state to capture any delegates.

"This race is about the next seven weeks, not the next seven states," Dean communications director Tricia Enright said. "We will not let the pundits call this race; the people will, and that means this race comes down to winning delegates."

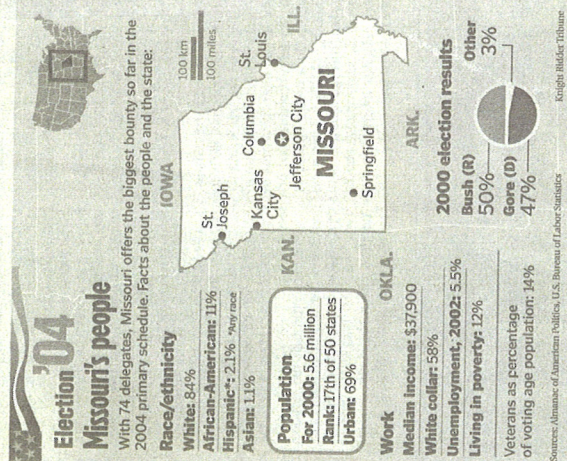
She also said that the campaign would highlight Dean's conviction and willingness to take courageous stands "while the Washington insider alternatives have changed their positions based on public opinion and the special interests."

Bright pointed out that Dean continued to lead in the delegate hunt with 114 to Kerry's 96 and Edwards' 39. Dean's advantage is due to early commitments from "superdelegates," party officials who are automatic convention delegates based on their positions within the party, such as members of Congress.

Dean remains formidable, Enright said, because of the campaign's sizable corps of volunteers and its ability to raise money from online contributors. Since Dean's New Hampshire defeat, he has raised nearly \$500,000 from computer donors, she said.

Still, it was reported that the campaign had just \$5 million on hand and had bills yet to pay. And Dean has asked campaign staffers to defer their paychecks for two weeks.

But King, who is also a member of Dean's national finance committee,



percent and no other contender in double digits. Dean was at 6 percent.

"It's easier to come back in a state where you're closer than a state where you're farther behind," King said.

Smaller states where TV advertising costs less, such as New Mexico and North Dakota, will probably be priorities over Missouri, King said.

The campaign's internal turmoil came at an inopportune time for Missouri, he said. Just as the campaign should be focused on the state, Dean was forced to redirect his attention to his campaign organization and hire Roy Neel, a former Washington lobbyist who once worked for Al Gore, to replace Trippi.

The campaign, King said, has been a roller-coaster ride of emotions. "To be totally candid, my emotional reserves are just about exhausted when it comes to presidential politics," he said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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