

Boggling  
Broadcast

## Political casino

Politics have always been allotted very few slots in the Interests Department of my daily life. In fact, after I was told the Latin roots for “politics” meant “many (poli) bloodsucking creatures (tics),” I ejected any political items that had managed to linger in my slots and replaced them with new interests. I became one of many remote spectators in the game of politics, focusing on other things that seemed to bear more relevance to my life. The 2007-2008 presidential campaign was no exception.

But as September rolled into October, and the faces of John McCain and Barack Obama (and Sarah Palin) continued to beautify the issues of TIME magazine, I began to realize it seemed absurd for a news columnist to dodge the dice of suspense being tossed around in this election. Which is why, one morning at precisely 1 a.m., I found myself typing in “presidential debates” on the YouTube, determined to get a closer look at these “many bloodsucking creatures.”

In short, I fell asleep. There wasn’t a any blood involved, although maybe a shower of spit particles here and there. But from the political substance that I did observe in the debates, I arrived at a somewhat unexpected conclusion.

Throughout each debate, there was a consistent advancement on both sides. McCain’s proposal of tax cuts for lower-income citizens, for example, was immediately rebuked by Obama’s clarification that it contained loopholes and would add taxes to healthcare instead. Each side had strong standing points, legitimate evidence, and logical suggestions backed by reason.

Maybe it was my lack of experience, but after watching a few of these debates, I came to an ambidextrous conclusion: both parties seemed equally strong, equally competent, and equally driven. The opinions were most certainly different, but with each candidate’s level of preparation, reasoning, and support, it was near impossible to point out a superior. Frankly, this relatively balanced playing ground reminded me of gambling.

To many people, gambling is linked with a negative connotation. But after seeing how competent both presidential candidates were, I realized the campaign was largely a gamble that wagered upon the opinions of every voting citizen. Each player started out fair and square, each player had his share of advantages, and each player had to depend heavily on the capricious sway of America’s decision.

The fact is, McCain and Obama have laid their bets on America, and at this point in the game, much of what will result is only a matter of chance.

We might not realize it, but as students, make gambles from time to time as well, though less jeopardizing than running for president. Although it’s not necessarily a bad thing, decisions made with some level of uncertainty are inevitable. Decisions like which class to concentrate on for a final, which clubs to commit to, and even who to ask to Homecoming are all risks to some degree.

For Obama and McCain, engaging themselves in an all-or-nothing race calls for real gamblers’ guts. There is more to running a campaign than the individual candidate’s strategy and ability. There is a considerable bit of risk involved, and a substantial prospect of luck.

So perhaps it is high time I took some chances and re-invest a few interest slots at the Political Casino. Because really, what’s life without knowing you just might hit the jackpot?