

## Past presidential debate at Washington University

*Historical facts about the Oct. 11, 1992, presidential debate and the debate originally scheduled for Sept. 25, 1996.*

**HISTORICAL SITE:** Washington University in St. Louis hosted the first nationally televised three-person presidential debate on Sunday, Oct. 11, 1992. The site of the debate — the Washington University Athletic Complex — also was the site of the 1904 World Olympics, the first Olympic competition ever held in the Western Hemisphere. In 1996, the university again was selected as a presidential debate site, but that event was cancelled later when the candidates negotiated a reduction in the number of presidential debates from three to just two.

**PARTICIPANTS:** The 90-minute debate in 1992, sponsored by the bipartisan Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD), featured President George Bush, Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton and independent candidate Ross Perot. Questions were posed by moderator Jim Lehrer, then co-anchor of the “MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour,” and a panel of three journalists: Ann Compton, then ABC White House correspondent; John Mashek, then White House correspondent for the *Boston Globe*; and Sander Vanocur, former CBS, ABC and NBC reporter.

**ON-SITE AUDIENCE:** Seating was very limited in the Field House due to the requirements of four television network platforms, additional camera sites and a three-level stage consisting of a 65-foot-wide by 40-foot-deep raised platform where the candidates stood behind lecterns. Of the approximately 600 people in the debate hall, 250 were Washington University students who were chosen through a lottery. All tickets allocated to the university went to students. Other seats in the debate hall went to reporters and to an equal number of invited guests of the candidates.

The debate, which began at 6 p.m. CST, was broadcast simultaneously throughout the Washington University campus, including Brookings Quadrangle, where a giant screen was erected outdoors for several hundred people; and Edison Theatre, which accommodated 600, including then-Chancellor William H. Danforth.

**WORLD-WIDE AUDIENCE:** Approximately 100 million Americans and millions of others worldwide watched the debate that was telecast live from Washington University.

**MEDIA MANIA:** Press credentials were issued to more than 1,000 local, national and international media representatives. The Athletic Complex’s recreational gym, adjacent to the Field House, was turned into a temporary media center where more than 550 journalists watched the debate on TV monitors and then filed their stories. More than 3,000 new telephone lines were installed throughout the complex. The media center also was the area where the candidates’ “spin doctors” gave their commentary and analysis of the debate.

ABC-TV provided pooled audio and video for CBS, NBC, CNN, Fox, C-SPAN and PBS for the entire debate and offered 48 video and 48 audio feeds to affiliate stations worldwide. Eight pool video cameras were positioned throughout the debate hall. The three major television networks and CNN had large platforms for their cameras and news anchors at the rear of the debate hall.

## **Facts on past debate—continued**

**COSTS:** Most of the costs of the debate were underwritten by a \$500,000 gift made by Anheuser-Busch Cos. Inc. to the university to support the debate through the auspices of the CPD. Washington University students, faculty and staff made substantial in-kind contributions of their time and energy to help with the many operational requirements of staging the debate. In addition, the debate preparations were supported by other in-kind contributions of labor and materials from local St. Louis corporations. The building materials were disassembled after the debate and donated to Habitat for Humanity.

Any additional costs not covered by the CPD and in-kind contributions from Washington University and St. Louis corporations were covered by an anonymous contribution to the university, restricted for that purpose.

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