

I'm a fan of both politics and sports. They're of interest because they have so many similarities. The competition angle is obvious, of course, but the skills, personal qualities and uniqueness of the players in both arenas of combat are what really catch the fans' attention.

But I've been focusing on the careers of politicians very closely, simply because the sport of politics is the bread and butter to every one of us. Two members especially catch my eye, for at first glance they seem to have a bit in common. Congressman Allen West and President Barack Obama, when brought up in discussions, are considered "black men." That's where their similarities end. West is the proud descendant of slaves, while Obama is a first-generation American, a descendant of West African Muslim slave traders. Big difference.

Obama was raised by a dysfunctional family. His birth and adopted father deserted him, leaving him in the care of his grandparents and Frank Marshall Davis, for much of the time. He was schooled mostly in elite private institutions, from grade school up to Columbia and Harvard. Strangely, we know nothing of his performance because he has ordered his records sealed to the public. One wonders why.

Allen West joined ROTC in high school in the inner-city neighborhoods of Atlanta, Ga. He received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Tennessee, his first master's degree at Kansas State and a second from the Command and General Staff Officer College. His father and older brother were military career men, and his mom worked for the Marine Corps. He will tell you that he was raised by his family "to believe in God and country." He practices this.

Obama, in the two books claimed to be written by him, indicates he was unhappy with this country, its "racism" and his feeling of inadequacy and dislike for whites. He claims in "Audacity of Hope" that he harbored a "coil of rage" against whites. His winning slogan for the 2008 campaign was "Hope and Change!" That dream began when he was in his early teens, and from his books, you can understand just what kind of hope and change he means. The church he selected, the United Trinity Church of Christ in Chicago, was led by the Rev. Jeremiah H. Wright, an outspoken white, America and Jew hater. Obama has called him "my uncle" and "my counselor." He had many opportunities to leave this church in disgust, as Oprah did. He never took that option. Why not?

West served for over 20 years in the military and rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel, retiring

after earning many battlefield honors and awards. His troops honored him when he ran for office, offering their support and even public appearances at his events. He was truly beloved by his men. The Wests are a church-going, religious family. They don't wear their religion on their sleeves. They practice it. West has spoken at many synagogues and expressed his wholehearted support for Israel. He is there now on his second visit. He makes no bones about it -- he supports democracy wherever it struggles to survive.

So how do these guys stack up in the eyes of the public? Who is the man with the highest level of credibility? While Obama continues his lackluster leadership of the country as it reels from one fumble after the other, he continues to ignore the rudderless ship of state that should be under his command. At this very moment, he is vacationing, playing golf and cavorting with "millionaires and billionaires" at Martha's Vineyard. During this time at play, the stock market is plunging, many Americans will join the unemployment rolls, inflation will continue to rise, homes will be foreclosed, and Obama will give us another head-in-the-soup solution speech when his head clears from living in the fairy tale land of big names and bucks.

Meanwhile, Allen West has irritated his colleagues in Washington, D.C., insisting that Congress does not work nearly enough days each month to accomplish its goals. In fact, he suggested quite strongly that Speaker of the House John Boehner immediately call the House back into session during this crisis. No such luck.

West's concerns are for the people of the United States, not for his own rest and relaxation. That's a leader I want to run this country. As they say in sports terminology, in a clutch situation, give me the guy who will come through, not the guy who will choke!

by Alan Bergstein