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B6

Subject: Fw: Hillary Clinton's Capitol Hill tour de force OR What Hillary has in common with Kobe

Nice !!!!

From: Chris Cillizza [mailto:[redacted]]

Sent: Thursday, January 24, 2013 01:41 PM

To: Chris Cillizza [redacted]

Subject: Hillary Clinton's Capitol Hill tour de force OR What Hillary has in common with Kobe

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/01/24/hillary-clintons-capitol-hill-tour-de-force/>

Hillary Clinton's Capitol Hill tour de force

By Chris Cillizza , Updated: January 24, 2013

Just in case the world had forgotten about the substantial political abilities of Hillary Clinton, she reminded everyone of them during hearings focused on the Benghazi, Libya attacks Wednesday on Capitol Hill.

Clinton spent the better part of six hours — first before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee then before the House Foreign Affairs Committee — answering often withering questions and critiques about the attacks that left four American diplomats including Ambassador Chris Stevens dead.

She did so without once making news — in a bad way — on an incredibly sensitive and divisive issue while displaying (in relatively equal measure) sadness, anger, humor and seriousness, not to mention an unquestioned depth of knowledge on the subject matter. And she did so having spent much of the last month out of the public

eye as she sought to recover from a concussion and blood clot.

From a pure political performance perspective, it was a masterwork. (We'll leave the question of whether what Clinton said was sound from a diplomatic and policy perspective to others who know much more on those subjects than us.)

Because it feels like Hillary Clinton has always been a part of our public life, it's easy to overlook just how difficult what she did on Wednesday actually is. But, try this exercise: Imagine anyone else weighing a bid for president in Clinton's shoes on Wednesday. Could Govs. Martin O'Malley (Md.) or Andrew Cuomo (N.Y.) have pulled it off as smoothly as Clinton? No. Neither could Sens. Amy Klobuchar (Minn.) or Kirstin Gillibrand (N.Y.).

(The only potential 2016 Democratic candidate who could have come close to Clinton's performance is Vice President Joe Biden but, given Biden's tendency to talk too much, he might have gotten himself into trouble.)

That's not a judgment on the relative abilities of Cuomo, O'Malley, Klobuchar or Gillibrand. Rather, it simply proves that Clinton is, at the moment, in a different political class than the other possible Democratic candidates in 2016.

Think of it this way. Everyone mentioned above except Clinton is like Anthony Davis, the star center of the New Orleans Hornets (soon to be Pelicans!). Davis was the number one pick in the 2012 NBA Draft and has a skill set — long arms, great instincts, good leaping ability — that should add up to stardom. But, he has struggled somewhat in his rookie year as he tries to adjust to the NBA game and find out what he needs to do to be successful. Cuomo, O'Malley and the rest all are seen as rising political stars but they haven't proven it on the national stage just yet. And, when/if they do decide to run, there will be an adjustment period of some indeterminate length as they figure out what works for them and what, well, doesn't.

Clinton, on the other hand, is like Kobe Bryant. Bryant is not only a unique talent but he's been around long enough to understand the rhythm of an NBA season, to pick his spots, to figure out different ways to score now that he is older and his athleticism is fading. That's Clinton. She understands her own political strengths and weaknesses. She gets the game of politics and she knows how to play it. She is a finished product, politically speaking.

Now, that doesn't mean that if Clinton decides to run for president in 2016 — and everything we hear is that she simply isn't thinking about it right now and won't be making a decision anytime soon — that she would be a shoo-in to be the Democratic nominee.

Clinton had many of these same political strengths when she ran for president in 2008, and we know how that turned out. In that race, she ran into someone in Barack Obama who simply had more natural ability as a politician than she did, and that talent wiped out all of the seeming advantages she had accrued over her years in public service.

But, at least at the moment, there doesn't appear to be a Barack Obama-like figure in the 2016 Democratic field. And, Clinton almost certainly has learned some lessons from the overly cautious, top-down approach she brought to the 2008 race.

Add it all up and here's what Hillary Clinton reminded the political world of on Wednesday: If she runs in 2016, she is the top tier of the Democratic field.

Chris Cillizza

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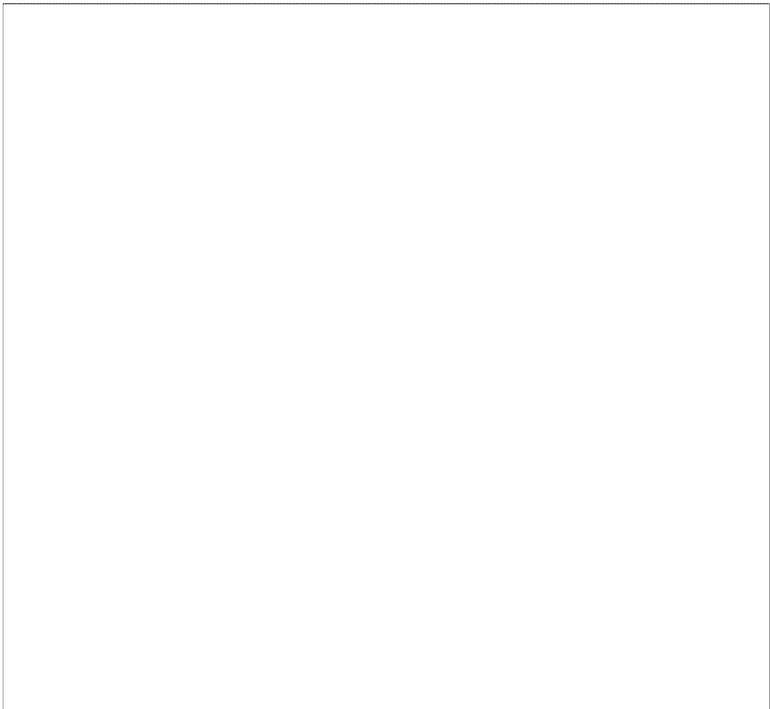
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