

Ted Cruz just humiliated Donald Trump by refusing to endorse him during his convention speech

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CLEVELAND — During [Ted Cruz's](#) speech at the [Republican convention](#) Wednesday night, he conspicuously refused to endorse [Donald Trump](#) for president — and attendees were furious.

"I congratulate Donald Trump on winning the nomination last night," Cruz said at the outset of his speech. "And like each of you, I want to see the principles that our party believes prevail in November."

He never mentioned Trump's name again. And for a while, his speech — which laid out the principles he personally believed in — was very well-received.

But as the speech stretched on without an endorsement, attendees began to repeatedly interrupt Cruz with shouts of "Trump!" and "We want Trump!"

Cruz didn't give in. And when he wrapped up his endorsement-less remarks, he was booed off the stage in a truly remarkable scene.

Cruz's remarks were a striking rebuke of the nominee and can only be viewed as a major embarrassment for Trump. And it will be the biggest story of this night of the convention. It's hard to believe that Trump's team and the RNC agreed to let Cruz speak without the promise of an endorsement in hand. But that seems to be what ended up happening.

No, Cruz didn't outright *criticize* the man he once [called](#) "utterly amoral," "a pathological liar," and "a narcissist at a level I don't think this country has ever seen."

Still, he must have known he'd likely be booed in front of a pro-Trump crowd. And he was willing to take this stance regardless.

What Cruz said

For a striking contrast, watch Scott Walker's speech, delivered half an hour before Cruz's. Walker repeatedly praised Trump without qualification, and attacked Clinton. "We need to support Donald Trump and Mike Pence for President and Vice President," Walker said. He added later: "Let me be clear: a vote for anyone other than Donald Trump in November is a vote for Hillary Clinton."

Cruz did none of that.

He began by telling a moving story about Caroline Smith, the daughter of one of the police officers killed in Dallas earlier this month. According to Cruz, Smith said that, on the day he died, her father asked her, "What if this is the last time you ever kiss or hug me?"

Then Cruz transitioned to the big picture: "What if this, right now, is our last time? Our last moment to do something for our families and our country?"

He proceeded to lay out the principles he himself believed in, in what effectively amounted to the first speech of his 2020 presidential campaign. He framed it around "freedom" — "freedom to choose your child's education," "to choose your own doctor," and "to provide for your family without the IRS beating down your door," among other things.

But overall, the speech seemed designed to encourage attendees — and, perhaps more importantly, viewers at home — to envision what it would be like to have *Cruz*, rather than Trump, as the head of the party.

Cruz thinks he's Ronald Reagan in 1976

It's pretty clear that Cruz believes his loss in this primary was similar to Ronald Reagan's near miss in 1976 — a near miss that will position him well to take over the party and lead it to a sweeping national landslide victory four years later.

In reality, it's not clear how similar the two situations are. Reagan came so close to Gerald Ford in the delegate count that year that, when the convention began, it was legitimately unclear who would be the nominee.

But Cruz only won four primaries and five caucuses — and quit the race over two months ago. Plus, when he quit, his popularity among GOP voters [was plummeting](#). What's more, Cruz isn't the only person hoping to capitalize on an expected Trump loss — there's also Marco Rubio, Tom Cotton, and Ben Sasse in the Senate alone.

To further the comparison, [check out the famous speech](#) Reagan gave at the convention after his 1976 loss, apparently impromptu. In relatable yet moving rhetoric, Reagan warned about two dangers: the erosion of freedom, and the risk of nuclear destruction. The speech was rapturously received by delegates.

Cruz's speech Wednesday night was also rapturously received — at first. But when it became clear he wasn't going to endorse Trump, the crowd turned against him. Reagan didn't leave to loud boos, he left to big cheers. This was quite different.

Cruz has cast his lot with anti-Trump conservatives

It's well-known that Cruz loathes Trump personally. Trump is the man who dubbed him "Lyin' Ted," [who attacked his wife](#), and who ludicrously suggested that his father had something to do [with the JFK assassination](#).

Still, many political observers expected him to come around and offer either a de facto endorsement or an outright one, perhaps emphasizing the importance of party unity and defeating Hillary Clinton.

That's especially true because it's clear Cruz wants to be the Republican nominee in 2020. As [Politico's Shane Goldmacher reported](#), Cruz's team has already embarked upon a review of all their campaign decisions this year, to better set up for a likely 2020 run should Trump lose (or, perhaps, [some speculate](#), even a primary challenge against Trump should he win). And to win, he'll need to convert some of Trump's voters.

But Cruz didn't endorse the billionaire. Unlike Rubio, Walker, Pence, and so many others with 2020 ambitions, he

took a stand, even though it meant loud boos. He's betting that his party *isn't* the party of Trump. We'll see if he's right.
