Tuesday, November 13. 2007

Why DaBean will take AWTeen

Flagg has announced that the AWTeen election results will be published tomorrow, November 14. We're not completely in the dark about how the race might turn out, though, as exit polls have shown a close call. However, some interesting interviews have shown that additional forces are at work that I believe will lead to a startling upset in this race. After analyzing data from several sources, I predict that DaBean will be AWTeen's first Governor.

I recently labeled DaBean the "Ron Paul of Activeworlds." Just as Paul is experiencing a late surge in the presidential race, DaBean surged late in this campaign. Before the official list of candidates was announced, DaBean was polling with near-zero support in the straw polls. His campaign, with Kapara as co-Governor, seemed loosely defined and even more loosely organized. It looked as if he wouldn't have the slightest chance of even getting onto the ballot.

As the campaign unfolded, however, DaBean continued to gain more and more support until he surpassed even Matthew in the final poll. He still lags slightly behind Strike Rapier in that poll, but I predict that DaBean has managed to surpass Strike and will be announced as AWTeen's next Governor tomorrow.

Why would I draw such a seemingly off-the-wall conclusion? First, DaBean's rise in support has spoken for itself. Since there were no major events during the last days of the election, nothing indicates that the bottom would have fallen out from under DaBean's support at the last minute. On the other hand, Strike's numbers have trended downward over time. Whereas he took a large percentage of the vote in the first polls, Strike garnered less conclusive leads in latter votes. Likewise, there is no reason to suspect that trend has reversed, either.

Second, I interviewed twenty citizens in-world using telegrams to find out who they voted for. Surprisingly, the in-world numbers turned out much differently than those on the forums. In-world, DaBean garnered three votes for every two of Strike's, with Matthew receiving little support. When I probed further in an attempt to determine why the results were so strikingly different, I found that there was one nearly-universal answer: DaBean's work with AWNewbie was exceptional, and the citizens felt that he would contribute similarly to AWTeen.

How could the race have turned around so unexpectedly? Here's why:

Strike Rapier has been very active in the AWTeen forums, while DaBean has made few posts. Because this election was so non-political, saying nothing actually helped more than talking about the issues. As soon as someone made a post about anything of substance, it was immediately flamed out. Strike Rapier had nothing to gain, but a lot to lose. Strike Rapier was framed by some citizens over his handling of free expression and speech, and he lost his cool in the forums when responding. Matthew was also framed by his opponents as being inept and too young for the job, a stigma he was unable to shake. Even after the discussion died down, people who were just reading the threads were deterred away from both of the criticized candidates.
DaBean and Strike Rapier have extensive contacts elsewhere in the Universe, whereas Matthew's main contacts come from within AWTeen, a demographic already involved with the election. Because Flagg did not prevent people who have never visited AWTeen from voting, this election was decided by how high turnout outside the community was, not by the smaller number of citizens who were active within the AWTeen community.
The fact that DaBean heads a "Newbie" world helped immensely. Anyone who he assisted in the world is likely to know him personally and vote for him, so he likely took a large percentage of the new citizen vote.
Strike Rapier has a lot invested in Activeworlds, but he manages a number of other galaxies and Universes. Citizens of those Universes and Galaxies and solservers can't vote in AWTeen's elections, and they comprise a larger part of his social network.
As has been stated before, the Activeworlds forums are not frequented by everyone. DaBean's demographic of outsiders is unlikely to participate very actively in the straw or exit polls, and those polls have relatively small samples.
When DaBean is announced as the world's next Governor tomorrow, AWTeen will take a turn in a new direction. Even if he isn't and someone else is selected, whomever the eventually chosen Governor is will face immense challenges, and will have to work like he's never worked before if he is to be reelected.

Posted by Brant in Commentary at 08:38

In response to item #4:

DaBean doesn't "head" AWNewbie. I do. DaBean is an assistant caretaker not the caretaker of AWNewbie.

Please try to get your facts straight.

Thanks,
Ryan
Anonymous on Nov 14 2007, 04:32