

GOLDEN: For GOP, Romney is inevitable

3:43 PM, Oct. 18, 2011 | [Comments](#)

A A

When Herman Cain announced his intention to seek the Republican nomination for president, his effort was dismissed as quixotic, quirky and self-aggrandizing, aimed more at influencing the national policy debate than at actually securing the nomination.

His campaign was likened to that of perennial Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, who sought, through national media attention, to provoke the major party candidates into addressing his issues.

Suddenly, however, the words quixotic, quirky and self-aggrandizing have turned into serious, surge and front-runner as Cain rose to third place in several polls and actually led the two major competitors — former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney and Texas Gov. Rick Perry — in one national survey.

Without minimizing Cain or his supporters, his ascent to the top tier is more of a reflection on the unsettled nature of the Republican candidates than any indication that Cain has a legitimate chance at the nomination.

Like Perry and Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann before him, he has simply rushed in to fill the power vacuum at the top of the field. And, like them, his stay will be temporary.

Romney was pretty much the consistent leader in polling until Perry announced his candidacy and literally within hours was installed as the front-runner. He has since fallen far behind after a series of poor debate performances. Bachmann won the straw poll in Iowa and assumed the lead but rapidly descended into single digits after a number of gaffes.

The rest of the field has reached no higher than the 10-point support level in the polls.

Recruiting big-name Republicans — former President George W. Bush and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger — along with big-name donors to pressure Gov. Chris Christie into entering the race was another sign of the unease with which the party's movers and shakers view the current field.

Republican leaders see an incumbent president badly wounded politically and ripe for the taking. Unemployment is stuck above 9 percent, economic growth barely has a pulse, the poverty rate is at

TOP VIDEO PICKS

YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN

Oceanport man found dead outside Eatontown store killed himself, police say (The Asbury Park Press)

Belmar cop shoots gun-wielding suspect in foot, police say (The Asbury Park Press)

Poor judgment in pension ruling (The Asbury Park Press)

So close! AC casino revenues down less than 1 percent (The Asbury Park Press)

Fight pancreatic cancer, honor Steve Jobs' memory (The Asbury Park Press)

SPONSORED LINKS

Waitress scams bad tippers (BankRate.com)

Chicago has a Dirty, Filthy BOSS (Starz)

