Donald Trump v Kamala Harris debate: Key weapon Harris used to get under Trump's skin

Kamala Harris landed a huge win over Donald Trump in their debate with one slick move, a leading body language expert says.

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2 min read

September 11, 2024 - 3:16PM

National News Network

Kamala Harris's wild expressions steal spotlight in debate with Trump

The US presidential debate was a huge win for Kamala Harris, according to a leading Australian body language expert.

Dr Louise Mahler said the US Vice President dominated Donald Trump after a shaky start. "For Harris the word salads and cackling were gone, she was focused, always on point and delivered under the spotlight," she said.

Dr Mahler said Harris had "nailed" the debate and was well prepared while Mr Trump at times stumbled.

Kamala Harris' facial expressions were telling during the debate. Picture: AFP

"Trump's best moment came on international policy, where he held focus and sounded and looked strong, but these were rare moments in the nearly two-hour debate," she said.

The communication expert said both candidates looked nervous in the opening minutes, with Mr Trump appearing to lose his train of thought while Ms Harris' voice broke and she seemed to have a case of dry mouth.

However, Ms Harris owned the room when she kicked off the proceedings by making a point of walking over to Mr Trump and reaching out to shake his hand.

Kamala Harris made a point of introducing herself and shaking Donald Trump's hand. Picture: AFP

"From the moment she walked onto the stage, extended her arm and introduced herself to Donald Trump it was Kamala Harris who was bossing this debate and she never relented," Dr Mahler said.

"The game is to talk hard and fast and launch attacks on policy or, in the case of Trump, Harris' lack of policies," Dr Mahler said.

"Trump at times looked aggressive and Kamala Harris looked at times bemused by him."

Dr Mahler said Ms Harris "quickly moved into her groove" and delivered her words strongly."

Former US president Donald Trump upped the aggression. Picture: AFP

Kamala Harris at times appeared bemused. Picture: AFP

"Trump by contrast seemed to lack energy, as he leaned forward and was constantly looking down when Harris spoke," she said.

His gestures were unusually small and limited – it was an off night for the former US president."

"Both had a clear tactic in dealing with each other, for Trump it was dismissiveness, he refused to look at Harris and wanted to attack her perceived

lack of policy – it was a tactic that did not work and in the end he looked frustrated and angry."

"Harris by the other hand delivered perfectly. When Trump spoke, she maintained a constant stare and when he rambled off topic or said something strange or weird, she shook her head or laughed – intimating that you are now listening to your crazy old uncle."

Dr Mahler said Ms Harris looked and sounded presidential throughout.

"What was key was her needling of Trump, she constantly baited the former President to see if his ego would step in and distract him from his answer – it worked brilliantly – with Trump constantly defending himself and getting lost in his thoughts.

"This was perfectly displayed on the question of immigration – a strength for Trump – but instead Harris sidetracked him on criticism of his rallies, he missed the mark and never recovered."

The body language expert said while it may have not been a full knockout blow, the debate could well be pivotal for the Harris campaign.