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Politics

THE CHALLENGERS

All not lost as mayoral losers ponder next step

Political observers say some hopefuls raised their profile

By **Stephanie Ebbert** | GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 25, 2013

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JOHN TLUMACKI/GLOBE STAFF

Mike Ross greeted Bessie Kotsakis before she voted in Jamaica Plain. He gave up his job as city councilor to run for mayor.

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Now what?

Ten of the 12 candidates who aspired to be the next mayor of Boston are now wondering what to dream next. Instead of planning the final sprint to the Nov. 5 election, they are deciding which top vote-getter to back — State Representative Martin J. Walsh or Councilor John R. Connolly.

The brutally compact and crowded preliminary election season eliminated most of the field — including Suffolk District Attorney Daniel F. Conley, nonprofit executive Charlotte Golar Richie, community leaders John Barros and Bill Walczak, radio host Charles L. Clemons Jr., and former teacher David James Wyatt. Three other contenders lost their mayoral hopes as well as their day jobs: Councilors Felix G. Arroyo, Robert Consalvo, and Michael P. Ross gave up their chances to be reelected to run unsuccessfully for mayor. A fourth councilor, Charles C. Yancey, will appear on the ballot in November only because he hedged his bet and ran for City Council as well as mayor.

Dejected supporters at would-be victory parties faced the reality Tuesday that the candidates they had

given so many hours to were finished.

“We all worked really hard. We all hoped it would be a better showing,” said Vivian Meranda, 60, a Consalvo volunteer.

Her candidate tried to bolster the faithful, though, pledging a comeback.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Consalvo told his supporters at the Elks Lodge in West Roxbury. “I will continue to have a strong political life in the city.”

An entire generation of politicians had waited for a chance to run for mayor during Thomas M. Menino’s long reign. The crowded field of candidates that emerged jockeyed closely for position throughout the race, keeping hopes elevated for an impossible number of candidates.

Still, political observers thought that most contenders came out unscathed and in position for another campaign with, perhaps, better odds.

“I don’t think anyone did lasting damage,” said Peter Ubertaccio, associate professor of political science at Stonehill College. “I don’t think that you could look at any of these campaigns and say well, it was a disaster.’ ”

The biggest disappointment, Ubertaccio said, was Arroyo, the only Latino in the race, whose campaign was backed by the consultants who drove the winning campaigns of Governor Deval Patrick and Senator Elizabeth Warren.

“He brought on the biggest star power in terms of political consultants and despite that, was really never able to take off,” he said.

Golar Richie, who had served as a state representative and aide to Menino and Patrick, ran a campaign that many viewed as lackluster, but her third-place finish will make her a sought-after endorsement.

“Had she run a better campaign, a lot of folks may wonder if she may in fact have come in second,” Ubertaccio said. “If she hitches her wagon to a winning mayoral candidate, she’ll probably remain in city government for a while.”

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At her party, Golar Richie hugged supporters and danced, smiling broadly.

“Clearly this isn’t the speech I wanted to give this evening,” she said. “But when I look at all that we have accomplished, all that we have done together, I have to say, we have come such a long, long way.”

Conley, who placed fourth, began trying to dispel rumors Tuesday night that he would run for attorney general next year, since the current office holder, Martha Coakley, is running for governor.

“Even today people at the polls said, ‘Hey, if you don’t work out, you’d make a great AG,’” Conley told reporters after conceding his loss. “I’m not running for AG, OK? I’m running for DA. I’m happy with that. I love it. It’s a great job.”

Other candidates increased their visibility and viability just by running, noted Michael J. McCormack, a onetime city councilor and a close observer.

Barros, for instance, was little known in city politics, though he had been appointed to the school board and was director of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.

He impressed many as a young candidate on the rise.

“Barros, I thought, has done a terrific job in terms of increasing the profile,” McCormack said. “If I’m a new mayor on Nov. 5 and looking around for talented people, he’s certainly one of the people I’d be talking to.”

Walczak, who plans to resume his job as vice president of external relations at Shawmut Design and Construction, said the political spotlight has not changed him.

“I don’t feel any differently,” Walczak said, staring at the TV, which was reeling off the poll results as they trickled in. “I’m still Bill Walczak the community guy who is trying to do my best, and trying to improve the community and this city.”

Arroyo hinted that he would seek public office again.

“This is my city. I love this city,” Arroyo said. “I am a son of Boston.”

“Not everybody’s Boston is the same. But it can be and it should be. And, I don’t know if you heard, but I’m young,” he told the crowd. “I’m not going anywhere folks.”

To which a woman yelled back: “Neither are we.”

Maria Cramer, Meghan E. Irons, Akilah Johnson, and Maria Sacchetti of the Globe staff, and Globe

correspondents Dan Adams, Todd Feathers, and Matt Rocheleau contributed to this report. Stephanie Ebbert can be reached at Stephanie.Ebbert@globe.com.

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