



Episode 867: The Trump Win and the Hillary Loss: Presidential Historian Doug Wead Breaks It All Down

Guest: Doug Wead

WOODS: Very interesting book. Let me tell you something: *Game of Thorns* is a guilty pleasure in a way, because you're going to read about a lot of things that the media doesn't want us reading about. But you tell the story like a story. It does not read like a *New York Times* article; it reads like a story. And it's a compelling story.

I had forgotten just how corrupt the Clintons were, and you give a lot of the background from all the way back in the 1990s telling stories that I barely remember. And a lot of my listeners — I have a lot of young listeners — they don't even remember the Clintons. They were three years old during the Clinton years. And this book unexpectedly has, I think, one of the best summaries of why you should be suspicious of the Clintons.

And by the way — just one other thing — in the back of my mind, even I as a right-of-center-guy, I in the back of my mind had this weird feeling that maybe conservatives had kind of exaggerated the problems with the Clintons. No longer [laughing]. Not after reading this. No longer. So let's start there, with the Clintons themselves. What an unlikely dynasty they became, given how grotesquely unlikable they are.

WEAD: It's pretty amazing, and part of the phenomenon, Tom, is that the Clintons have this way, I realized in writing the book. And I have to tell you; most of these interesting stories are coming to me from other people, from people either in the Clinton camp, or they're coming from people in Trump Tower, and so a lot of them — my name's on the book, but it's their stories. And some from China risked their lives to tell these stories.

But yeah, the Clintons had this modus operandi where they would move on, and you would grow weary of the scandal, and soon it would be superseded by another scandal that was more serious, so the attitude was, Okay, let's just drop this one and let's go on and deal with the next one. And so a lot of the loose ends never were tied at all, and when you go back, when you consider, Hey, she could be the president of the United States, and you go back to these old scandals, you find that they've been updated, and what at the time may have been rumor or speculation is now solid fact and is proven and you have witnesses and you have metrics to measure them by. So that's part of the surprise for me in revisiting these old scandals, is to find what we now know and compare that to what was in the headlines at the time.

WOODS: I have another podcast where every week my cohost and I critique the *New York Times* column of Paul Krugman.

WEAD: [laughing]

WOODS: And let me tell you about Paul Krugman's view of Hillary, because his view, honest to goodness, is that she lost because the media was so anti-Hillary. That's his view. Because all they did was home in on this phony-baloney email problem, but he says basically — and he says this in one of his columns — Okay, we know politicians are a little bit less honest than the average person, but I don't find her to be grotesquely less honest than the typical politician. I think she's basically about as honest as they come. That was — Now, what do you think about, though, on a more serious note: Krugman's view is that the reason she lost — this is not only Krugman's view — is that last-minute decision to reopen the email question. Do you think that is a plausible argument that that's why she lost?

WEAD: Yeah, no, no, that's not at all. But it was interesting to me to see where Jim Comey, how he finally arrived at that moment, and as you know in the book, Tom, the FBI had a 27-year war with the Clintons and vice versa. I mean, scandal after scandal and time and time again in his career, Jim Comey, in the Attorney's office in New York, later in the Justice Department, and finally as head of the FBI — time and time again, he'd come to the same conclusion: she's guilty but we can't prove it [laughing]. So they had a long history.

And you know in the news right now, Tom, this past week the news was that Donald Trump is ridiculous because he claims his predecessor wiretapped him and how ridiculous that Barack Obama would do that. Well, when the Clintons went into the White House, they were absolutely convinced that their predecessor, dear, sweet old George Herbert Walker Bush, who in fairness was Director of the CIA, had bugged them. They thought the private quarters of the White House were bugged.

They had the Secret Service do a sweep and then they called in the FBI to do a sweep, and then they decided they couldn't trust the FBI and they created their own White House Security Personnel Office that was manned by loyal campaign staffers, and they accessed all of the old files, the J. Edgar Hoover files of all of their political enemies. It was called Filegate; it's yet another one of the many Clinton scandals, and it sparked a congressional inquiry. My files were accessed by Hillary Clinton.

So we say that Donald Trump — the news media would like us to think he's ridiculous because he'd think his predecessor was tapping his phones, but the Clintons thought their predecessors were tapping them. I guess it's a common fear.

WOODS: Right, right, right. Understandable. Well, the story you're telling is a story that I think is a much more interesting story to tell than, let's say, the last three or four presidential elections, or maybe the past 10 for all I know. Maybe with the exception of the Reagan election in 1980. But even there, Reagan had his enemies within the Republican Party, but nothing, nothing even remotely approaching what Trump faced. And the Republican Party, they couldn't decide, really, if they wanted to ride the wave of Trump or resist him, and some people thought one and some people thought the other. Some people thought we've got to change the rules of

the convention. Can you say something about that aspect of the story, his relationship with the Republican Party and how it changed over time?

WEAD: Yeah, yeah, well, the establishment was convinced, of course, that he was going to implode, and they had a silver bullet. Some say it was the *Access Hollywood*; others say it was the British spy thing. But the Clintons knew of this and actually implied that to the Bushes, basically said to Jeb Bush, who outspent Donald Trump eight to one in the primaries – they basically said, Look, there's a silver bullet out there. It's easy to find. Your opposition research team will find it, and he's not going to be a factor. So the establishment Republicans were taken off guard. In fact, the Bushes themselves backpedaled to the Clintons and said, Now, what was that you were saying a few months ago? Can you help us out?

And I have to tell you, Tom, you know I worked at one time for the Bush family before Ron Paul – I had my Damascus road experience with Ron Paul. And I remember our opposition research team back in the '80s before the Internet was something to behold. I mean, intelligence operatives, people on the ground with video cameras following every candidate, eating in restaurants next to them and looking like tourists. It would have blown your mind. Every *National Geographic* and old *Life* magazines stacked up in shelves, hundreds of employees working in opposition research. So a modern-day opposition research with Jeb Bush and his millions of dollars would have been magnificent, but he could not find the silver bullet, and when he went back to the Clintons to ask for it, by that time they said, No way. This guy's going to go into the general election and we'll shoot the silver bullet then. He's going to be our opponent. We're not going to help you.

Now, I happen to believe, Tom, that besides personalities and rivalries and political dynasties, I believe that the reason the establishment, Republican and Democrat, lined up against him was because of these public things he was saying about taking on China and the balance of trade with China. I think that's what united the establishment against him.

WOODS: So the story really is a story of how did this extremely unlikely figure go on to defeat a woman who everybody assumed already had the coronation. This was just a formality. It was her turn. Everybody assumed this, and somehow it didn't happen. And it in a way is a story that we kind of know. We know that Trump tapped into a range of voters that hadn't really been reached by recent Republicans. But that's a story we kind of know already. Do you feel like after writing this book you have more insight into what the heck happened to cause this very, very, largely although not entirely unexpected outcome?

WEAD: Yes, I've learned a lot from researching it, things that I thought I knew and was pretty glib about that I realize now I didn't know. I mean, as you point out, she outspent him eight to one. That's staggering. I mean, we're counting, for example, the super PAC – she had the largest super PAC in American political history and she spent it. She raised all that money and spent it. And she out-staffed him five to one. She had 960,000 volunteers on the ground for the voter turnout, which dwarfed Barack Obama's four years before. It was truly magnificent. She had –

WOODS: Yeah, let me cut in a for a minute there, because that seems hard to understand. She had 1/100th the charisma. How did she command those volunteers?

WEAD: Well, people had investments in her. They gave her money. They believed in her. So the infrastructures of corporations and of unions and of groups and institutions, academia, Hollywood, that's what motivated them. Now, they overestimated it, of course, and it kind of evaporated on Election Day like snow on a sunny day. But they had 240 newspaper endorsements. Donald Trump had 19. They had all of academia, all of the major corporations, Wall Street, all of the international global corporate world, Hollywood.

All Donald Trump really had was \$1 billion of earned media [laughing]. And he had a message. And I would call over to Trump Tower; I'd say, You guys are off message again. This is ridiculous. And they'd say, No, we're not. And I'd say, Yes, you are; he just tweeted this and he tweeted that. This is political malpractice. And they would say, Nope, your problem is you don't understand the message. I said, Okay, humor me [laughing]. What's the message? What do you mean?

And they'd say, The message is: number one, Make America great again and get these jobs back from China, and number two, the message is: I'm not a politician. And all of these rough edges that bothered people are reassurance to those out there who are sick and tired of the last three presidents, Republican and Democrat, we've had, who've led us into the most corrupt system. We're like the Congo. We're like Brazil. And they don't understand the Federal Reserve or import-export banks; they don't understand all the details of what's happened, but they've got this innate instinct that it's corrupt and something's wrong and they know it, and they see Donald Trump as the disruptor and that's why they like him.

So this was the message. This was something that I was learning.

WOODS: You mention in your book that there's a telephone conversation we have some evidence of between Bill and Hillary, I guess probably toward the end of the election season, where he's very, very upset because he thinks the numbers are not where they should be and he thinks the message is not where it should be, that she for some reason feels like she can't be critical of the current state of the U.S. economy without implicitly criticizing Obama. And his view is: Obama's not running. You're running, and if you don't acknowledge what people are feeling, you're going to be in trouble. Which goes to show he's by far the better politician of the two of them.

WEAD: He is, and he's not only the better politician; when you read this book, you find out he's the better money raiser. He knows how to get the money. When she was in charge of getting the money and he was the public figure, they got into constant trouble all the time, scandal after scandal starting with the stock market thing — what was it? The commodities exchange, that ridiculous thing — and on and on, one after — Whitewater — one after another. Her attempts to get money led the scandal. His attempts to get money through the foundation were much more protected and nuanced and resulted in more money. But when she was the public figure and she had to stay —

Yeah, Tom, he was very upset about the Catholic vote, the union Catholic vote in those Rust Belt states, exactly what happened. He could sense it. And when Podesta's — He wanted her to go to Notre Dame University to speak for St. Patrick's Day. She wouldn't do it. Later on, when the Podesta emails were outed and they showed that the Clintons had made an attempt to co-opt the Catholic Church and change its doctrines, this was a huge scandal. The national media totally ignored it. But the emails were passed from bishop to bishop and diocese to diocese. Bill Clinton wanted her to get out in front of it and to say publicly, Nope, we don't agree with that. I denounce that. We're not going to do that. If I'm elected president, we will not have a campaign to have what they called a Catholic Spring where we change the doctrines of the Catholic Church. That's ridiculous. No.

Instead, she felt that the national media was covering for them and that they would only call more attention to it if she denounced it. He was saying, You've got to publicly say, No, that's just like Donald Trump would denounce some people who support him or denounce the *Access Hollywood* tape. She wouldn't do it. And so he got so mad at one point, he finished a call with her and he threw his telephone off the roof of his presidential pad in Little Rock, Arkansas.

WOODS: I'm curious about — I want to skip ahead and then maybe we'll jump back, but there was that one episode of the night before — I guess it was the day before the election, the Clinton campaign decided to cancel a fireworks show that they had planned for Election Day at 9:30pm. And I had wondered if that was because they had some inkling of what might be coming, and of course, victory fireworks would be a little bit ridiculous. You have a more benign explanation in your book, that they figured the result wouldn't be clear by then and it would be premature to do it. But do you think there was any inkling that they had — I mean, they've got all the money in the world to do all the polling in the world. Did they have any inkling 24 hours ahead of time of what they might be facing?

WEAD: Yes, they had an inkling that it was closer than they thought it was going to be, and that was really discouraging. And you know, you've been in politics all your life, Tom. You know that you have to run scared. You have to be prepared for the worst. That's how you do your best. So you have to have all of these negative scenarios in place. That's what motivates you. That's what keeps you going. So did she have that part of her brain working? Obviously she did. But it's still a stunning shock.

I mean, you'll hear people, their dad has cancer and he's 92 years old, and when he dies they're just stunned. Well, you could make that comparison here. They felt they were going to win. Yes, they cancelled the fireworks, but that's because they felt it would look really arrogant to have fireworks going off over the harbor of the Hudson River, when in fact, it hadn't been decided yet. And they knew it would be decided late, but they still felt they were going to win.

WOODS: All right, we'll continue this discussion after a word from our sponsor.

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Another thing I have to ask you is: it's highly, highly unusual — not just unusual, maybe unprecedented, as far as I know, for the candidate not to come out and speak to the

supporters the night of the election. It was not in any way contested at that point. It was quite clear that Trump had won. And Podesta comes out and sends everybody home, and then she makes a brief statement the following day. Now, there are all kinds of wild rumors about this. There are rumors that she was drunk. There are rumors that she hadn't even prepared a concession speech. What's your conclusion about what was really happening there?

WEAD: Yes, she had prepared a concession speech, but I first heard, Tom, from a source who was there at the Peninsula Hotel who said that she blew it, that she just lost her temper. She went berserk. She was screaming. And I heard all of this, and I thought, Well, maybe that's true. I'm not going to be the first one to publish it, though, because I don't know. And then a second source who was there said, Absolutely, there was smashing of glass. There was a lot of alcohol. And he said there was great profanity.

And then a third source was the Democrat former governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, who went on national TV, and when I started rewatching all of the networks, including NPR, and their election coverage, there was Rendell saying, I just came from the suites, the Clinton suites at the Peninsula Hotel. Secretary Clinton is very angry. She is very upset. Well, that confirmed what I was hearing. And this was public. This is Rendell speaking public. He didn't say she was weeping or she was discouraged or she was reflective. He said she was angry.

So I then went to sources in the Clinton campaign who worked for her for many years, 20, 30 years. I said, Is this possible? And I described the story. And they said, Absolutely. They said, That's her personality. She's like a light switch either way. She can be using profanity, terribly angry, and someone will walk in the room that doesn't know her well, and she'll suddenly, like a light switch going off, sound like this lovely grandmother and smile and laugh. So apparently this is a true story, and I reported it the way it was told to me by these multiple sources, and it was quite a moment.

WOODS: There were a few people who all along said, This guy's going to win; Trump is going to win. Ann Coulter was one of them. And I am not sure of this, but I feel like my instincts are telling me that you were one of them. Is that so? And if so, what was it — was it something about his character, or was there a particular event that turned you onto that idea?

WEAD: Well, yes, I did early on say that he might win. It was — I had seen it in history with Andrew Jackson, and I was deeply — I was fascinated by this whole China thing. That was really what was motivating him. And he expressed it to Melania. He said, I know what's wrong and I know how to fix it and I'd be very good at this. And Melania had said to him, You know, why? Why do you want to do this? We have such a good life. We've worked so hard to get here. We're now at a perfect place in our life where everything's just perfect, and do you have to do this? And he sounded like he did with his dad when he wanted to go to Manhattan and his dad said, No, no, no, you don't want that, son. We stay here in Queens and Brooklyn. You don't want to go to Manhattan.

And he said to Melania in a past tense, like he was a little boy and like it had already been taken away from him — he said, But I know what to do and I could be so good at

this. And she finally said to him, Well, if you want to do this, then you have to do this, Donald, but you will win. And that was her way of warning him: pal, if you think you're going to increase your market share or you're going to increase the power of your brand or you think this is some kind of a business deal, you'd better be prepared for the fact. If you don't believe it, I know it's going to happen. You're going to win this thing. So he had a sense.

And I felt — through all the Ron Paul stuff I'd been there, I felt that China is very much at the heart of this and somehow he's figured it out. That is, a tiny percentage of people in America make money off of China, and they include the Bushes and they include the Obamas and the Clintons, for years. You know from the book, the Clintons made money off China. And it's been the largest transfer of money in world history outside of the Middle East, the money from America to China. \$367 billion, the last trade deficit, 2015. They pay us back with manipulated dollars or money, and we've been really ripped. The poor have gotten poorer; the rich have gotten richer. We've had an end to free markets and free enterprise as we once knew it.

And Donald Trump figured this out and is willing to take it on. In my opinion, that's why you hear all the emphasis on Russia and pushing us towards confrontation with Russia: because you can't take on Russia and China at the same time, and in my opinion, it's a way that some — not all. There are genuine concerns about Russia — but some are trying to divert us away from dealing with the economic issues we have with China.

WOODS: Well, I'm not necessarily on board with the China issue, but I am interested in asking you in the time I have left about the choice of Mike Pence. Now, again, these are the sorts of questions that, at the time, everybody was talking about it. Why would he choose Mike Pence? What was the strategic thinking here? But we've now had months of time to think it over, and I wonder in the course of doing this if you've come up with an answer. Because Pence doesn't seem like a terrible person to me, but he seems like a typical, if you'll excuse me, deer-in-the-headlights, mainstream conservative Republican who repeats a lot of talking points but probably isn't particularly unconventional when it comes to trade or immigration. So why would you pick this guy?

WEAD: Well, here are some demographics, and let's hear them. It's hard to think in terms of numbers. But 1% of the American population are Muslim. Let that sink in just for a moment. 1%. Now, you can get lost in that 1%. There's a lot of money in that 1%. There's a lot of power and connections. And 12.9% are African American. 17.6% are Hispanic. And now we're getting to the real numbers. 22% are Catholic. Some of them are Hispanic; some are African American. But they're liberal; they're conservative. 22% Catholic.

Now we come to 26% of everybody who voted in this election was a white evangelical Christian. 26%. So you had Bill Clinton saying, Hey, you're losing the Catholic vote. This is unnecessary. It's ridiculous. You had Barack Obama saying, You are losing the white evangelical vote, and I got a big portion of those just by asking. You need to at least just ask. But that's one of the reasons that they picked Mike Pence, who was popular with evangelical Christians.

And you'll notice on November 4th, just a few days before the election, Hillary Clinton's celebrities all came together; they did a wonderful YouTube, "Get out the Vote" with celebrities. It was like "We Are the World." Great new music. And they used the name of Jesus as a curse word and the F word and profanity, "Get out and vote," you know, and promoting Hillary Clinton. Just imagine for a moment if a bunch of celebrities got together and used the name of Mohammad as a curse word in a political song to try to motivate voters, and you get an idea of what the Clinton campaign was doing wrong, and you get a little picture on why Donald Trump picked Mike Pence.

WOODS: All right, that is a reasonable explanation, I would say. Now, let me ask you as somebody who has studied both Hillary and Donald Trump and who has studied their voters: tell me what Trump has to do in this first term — or at least make a go of it, at least say to his voters, I did everything I could. What are three things he's got to do to be able to plausibly ask for reelection in 2020?

WEAD: I think he has to turn the economy around, and quite frankly, this is where some of our experience from years past, Tom, come into play. I call it Yellen envy, and I think that's part of the explanation for the boom in the stock market. I can't tell you how many corporate people I've met who are tired of the corruption.

Even companies that benefit from the Import-Export Bank, that benefit from the Federal Reserve, that benefit from Obama's stimulus program — which, as you may know, exempted major companies from environmental regulations. They all talk about the importance of the environment, and yet major companies in the name of creating new jobs were exempted while your son and daughter would have to keep all of those regulations if they started their company. Some of these companies are longing for a return to free enterprise. They've got good products. They come in at a good price. And if everything was equal, they feel they could be successful. They're tired of having to hire lobbyists to cheat to make money to carve out their own monopoly, and they're excited by the fact that Trump is trying to turn it around.

So I believe he will get reelected even if he doesn't build the wall and doesn't do some of these other things, though I expect he will. I think he'd get reelected if he turns the economy around, and I believe that's going to happen.

WOODS: Okay, that's interesting. I would have thought the wall would have to be done.

WEAD: Well, I —

WOODS: But maybe when push comes to shove, it's the economy's stupid, right?

WEAD: [laughing] In my humble opinion, but I think he's going to do the wall anyway. I think that's something he can do.

WOODS: Well, I'm linking — this is Episode 867. I'm linking to *Game of Thorns: The Inside Story of Hillary Clinton's Failed Campaign and Donald Trump's Winning Strategy*, linking to it at TomWoods.com/867, where I am also linking to your website, which is

DougWead.com, and I'm also linking to your Twitter. It is a Doug Wead smorgasbord at TomWoods.com/867. Well, thanks for your time. Best of luck. Looks like it's doing great so far. Glad to hear it.

WEAD: Thank you very much, Tom. It's so good to hear your voice. I love your stuff. You're a real statesman, and we appreciate you; the whole country appreciates you.

WOODS: If only that were true [laughing]. But thanks, Doug. I appreciate the kind words. Thanks a lot.

WEAD: Thank you.