

TED KENNEDY WITH BRAIN CANCER, ON (PROBABLY) MORPHINE, AND IN EXCRUCIATING PAIN CAN STILL READ A TELEPROMPTER BETTER THAN MCCAIN

Someone smart previewed the Republican convention next week by quipping we'd finally get to see whether McCain had won his six month wrestling match with a teleprompter.

I thought of that quip when I saw Kennedy speak last night. As someone whose own father died of brain cancer, I thought Kennedy looked great, with just a few stumbles on the teleprompter. "Even with brain cancer," I thought, "he's still better with a teleprompter than McCain."

Today, the NYT reported on just how amazing Kennedy's feat was. Not only was he sneaking off in the middle of cancer treatment to address the entire world, but he was suffering from excruciating kidney stones.

His aides said that after Mr. Kennedy finally decided he was well enough to come to Denver over the weekend, they became alarmed when he arrived on Sunday after a long charter airplane flight, accompanied by family members, aides and doctors, and reported being in excruciating pain.

Their first concern was that the pain was somehow related to his cancer, or the chemotherapy and radiology he had undergone, and that it had been complicated by the long flight or the high altitude of the city. A visit to a local hospital Sunday night revealed it

was kidney stones and was unrelated to his cancer.

Kennedy's handlers won't tell whether or not he was on morphine to dull the pain.

Kidney stones are notoriously painful, and typically treated with morphine or other painkillers. (Aides would not say whether Mr. Kennedy had been given painkillers, or whether any stones had passed.)

Kennedy also thankfully ignored Bob Shrum's suggestion that he give just a three-sentence statement.

But I guess that's the kind of man Kennedy is. The most telling detail from the NYT story is one related not to last night's efforts, but to his dramatic vote in support of Medicare earlier this summer.

One close associate, who demanded anonymity to discuss any element of Mr. Kennedy's medical condition, disclosed that the senator had suffered an unspecified but serious setback in July after he flew to Washington in the midst of treatment to cast a vote on a Medicare bill.

McCain's still wrestling with that teleprompter, while Kennedy is risking his health to save Medicare and elect Obama. I'm glad Kennedy's on our team.