

## [Washington Whispers](#)

# Team Gingrich Sees Bounce From Fox Debate

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By: Paul Bedard

Fresh off his best debate performance yet, Republican presidential candidate [Newt Gingrich](#) is sensing a comeback in South Carolina just in time to make himself the leading conservative rival to Mitt Romney.

"I think we're going to win," [said his daughter](#) Jackie Gingrich Cushman. She told Whispers today, "We're in it to win it."

While [Romney](#) holds a commanding lead in South Carolina, Gingrich is poised to be the top vote-getter of the conservative Romney alternatives in Saturday's primary. That could thrust him into a fight with Romney in the two subsequent contests in Florida and Nevada and might lead to other conservatives dropping out of the race.

However, if Rick [Santorum](#) and Texas Gov. Rick Perry stay in the race through the March 6 "Super Tuesday" elections, it could muddle the results further and pave the way to a Romney runaway.

Gingrich plans to spend the next four days fighting against that in South Carolina, a state the Georgian feels at home in, says Cushman.

The Gingrich line of attack is twofold: draw attention to his debate performance and highlight how the former Republican speaker worked with a Democratic president to get things done.

"We'll be talking about his debate performance, wouldn't you? When you have something that good, you've got to talk about it, right?" said Cushman.

[\[How Mitt Romney Can Defend His Record on Jobs.\]](#)

Team Gingrich plans to use that performance to claim that only he can stand up to Obama in the three presidential election debates in the fall.

"Seeing Newt Gingrich, seeing him on stage, seeing him so dominate the debate, really reinforces in people's mind that if you want anyone to stand up to President Barack Obama and debate him, it's Newt Gingrich. No one is as quick on his feet, no one has the depth of knowledge he has, no one has the experience he has," says Cushman, who is

campaigning in South Carolina for her dad. "When you put everyone on stage side by side, it makes it so much easier."

She said that the former speaker will also use the new attention to him to compare how he worked with former President Bill Clinton to balance the budget and reform welfare with Obama's constant battle with Congress.

"To be able to stand next to the man and say, 'You know, when I was speaker and we had a democratic president, we still got things done. Then President Obama's whole line [attacking Congress] sort of falls away,'" she said.

While there is little time left before the Saturday primary, she added that Gingrich hopes to prove that he is the best candidate to challenge Obama.

South Carolina voters, she said, "really want someone who is conservative and has their own values. But they also want a winner, let's be bluntly honest."