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HEADLINE: How Madden crafted upset of Thomas  
ELECTION 1994

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BODY:

The Democratic-controlled legislature long ago had stacked the deck against Republican Martin G. Madden heading into Tuesday's election.

But the first-term delegate triumphed against the odds through hard work, key endorsements from environmental organizations and a longtime county Democratic senator, pointed campaign literature and a leaner-government message carried by Republicans nationwide.

Mr. Madden defeated popular and influential three-term Democratic Del. Virginia M. Thomas, of Columbia, by fewer than 500 votes to win Howard's District 13 state Senate seat.

"I knew it was an uphill race, but I knew I could win," said Mr. Madden, who garnered 51 percent of the vote.

County Republicans lauded Mr. Madden's accomplishment in a district they say was purposefully redrawn to Ms. Thomas' advantage, where Democrats outnumber the GOP by a 3-2 ratio.

"No other person in Howard County could have done what Marty Madden did," said Republican Sen. Christopher J. McCabe, who won a second term in District 14.

Carol Arscott, vice president of a political campaign consulting firm, said Mr. Madden made large gains in a hurry to win, based on a poll she conducted for him in August.

"He focused on two issues he knew would move him the farthest -- taxes and the environment," said Ms. Arscott, who also is a Howard Republican Central Committee member.

"He had strong records on both and he stuck to his message, and he worked and he worked and he worked."

Even Ms. Thomas conceded that she may have been outworked by Mr. Madden, who is known for sign-waving along busy roads.

Ms. Thomas, vice chair of the House Environmental Matters Committee, said her campaign to unseat Sen. Thomas M. Yeager in the Democratic primary was "draining financially, emotionally and physically."

"There's only so much energy you have for a second race."

When a new District 13 was created under the 1992 redistricting plan, Elkridge, a conservative base for Mr. Madden, was eliminated, while East Columbia, Ms. Thomas' base and a Democratic bastion, remained intact.

Mr. Madden weighed two options: run for delegate in unfamiliar East Columbia where he said he could "do everything right and still lose, or run for Senate and get back 30,000 people I represent in southern Howard County and Prince George's County and perhaps have a chance."

Democratic leaders who helped craft the redistricting plan "underestimated the strength and quality of the candidate and people in the district," said Allan Kittleman, chairman of the Howard Republican Central Committee.

Mr. Madden said he also chose the Senate race because the two Democrats in the primary -- Ms. Thomas and Mr. Yeager -- each had long legislative records to contrast with his.

And Mr. Madden attacked Ms. Thomas, sending out several detailed, newspaper-style mailings criticizing her for supporting a variety of tax increases in 1992, inconsistent votes on environmental issues and government ethics bills, accepting gifts from lobbyists and missing House floor votes.

Last week, he mailed a 12-page tabloid section criticizing Ms. Thomas for attending numerous sporting events as a guest of lobbyists. Pictures and captions described where each candidate watched the 1993 baseball All-Star Game -- Ms. Thomas at Oriole Park at Camden Yards as a guest of Coca-Cola, and Mr. Madden at his Clarksville home.

The tabloid, which Ms. Thomas decried as a last-minute "character assassination," also included a "tax increase score card," listing 10 increases in taxes or fees supported by Ms. Thomas and opposed by Mr. Madden.

The race attracted the attention of the Howard County Taxpayers Association, which endorsed Mr. Madden.

Ms. Thomas conceded that her support of 1992 tax increases hurt her, especially because GOP gubernatorial candidate Ellen R. Sauerbrey's proposed 24 percent income tax proved so popular.

Mr. Madden said endorsements from the Sierra Club, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters and Mr. Yeager boosted his campaign.

The conservationists charged that Ms. Thomas was "duplicitous," too often changing her vote from committee to the floor to stay in good standing with the House Democratic leadership.

"Marty Madden was there for us behind the scenes as well as on the surface," said Nancy Davis, a Clarksville resident and board member of both environmental organizations.

"We felt [Ms. Thomas] was willing to compromise behind the scenes on our issues. She put [House] leadership above conviction to the environment."

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