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President, After Hard Week, Moves to Reassert Leadership

by Lou Cannon

[Story is on White House mood following press conference
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Now, for the first time since [Dean's testimony] close advisers to the President see an opportunity for Mr. Nixon to recover some of his lost leadership.

This opportunity is provided, in the White House view, by a combination of public wearying with Watergate and by Mr. Nixon's tough, skillful performance in last Wednesday's grueling, 50-minute news conference.

"He didn't blow up," said one aide after the ... news conference. "He really showed them."

The fact that Mr. Nixon's ability to survive press questioning produced such elation is itself a comment about the recent strain and tension of the Nixon Presidency.

[On Ziegler shoving incident:] Some of Mr. Nixon's most trusted aides were surprised and concerned by this outburst. Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren was carefully briefed on responses to the President's attitude and mental outlook, and he conceded at one point that "there is no question that during the past few months there have been periods of pressure of [sic] the President."

The fact that Warren responded to the questions at all is more remarkable than the answers he gave. Usually, neither Warren nor Ziegler would accept questions which started with a presumption that the President was overwrought.

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