

# Al Franken Knocks Down Dean Heckler

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Wise-cracking funnyman Al Franken yesterday body-slammed a demonstrator to the ground after the man tried to shout down Gov. Howard Dean.

The tussle left Franken's trademark thick-rim glasses broken, but he said he was not injured.

Franken -- who seemed in a state of shock and out of breath after the incident -- was helped back to his feet by several people who watched the tussle. Police arrived soon after.

"I got down low and took his legs out," said Franken afterwards.

Franken said he's not backing Dean but merely wanted to protect the right of people to speak freely. "I would have done it if he was a Dean supporter at a Kerry rally," he said.

"I'm neutral in this race but I'm for freedom of speech, which means people should be able to assemble and speak without being shouted down."

The trouble started when several supporters of fringe presidential candidate Lyndon Larouche began shouting accusations at Dean.

Franken emerged from the crowd and charged one male protester, grabbing him with a bear hug from behind and slamming him onto the floor.

"I was a wrestler so I used a wrestling move," Franken said.