MINNEAPOLIS (AdAge.com) -- Wednesday night has a new hit! It's part drama, but mostly reality, with a moving score and even more moving supporting characters. And in the end, the hero appears not in a scripted, stilted format, but live, to the applause of an awed audience. Unfortunately for the networks, it's a one-episode wonder. That is, unless a President Obama is running for re-election in 2012.

"Barack Obama: American Stories" ran on CBS, Fox and NBC and delivered a cumulative 8.1/22 rating and share in the ad-centric adult 18-49 demographic.

Voting with their remotes
Overall, the political infomercial ran on seven networks (joining the big broadcasters were Univision, BET, MSNBC and TV One). It delivered 33.5 million viewers in the broadest possible demographic (Persons 2-plus), which was 58% of the 57.4 million average for the three presidential debates that ran on 11 networks.
"American Stories" not only beat "America's Next Top Model" (2.0/6) on the CW, but ABC's "Pushing Daisies" (2.3/6), which pushed its delivery up 15% over season-to-date averages, due to it being the only scripted series alternative on network.

CBS's 2.3/6 meant the young senator nearly equaled last week's ratings for "The New Adventures of Old Christine." The NBC airing got the most votes on network TV last night, delivering a 3.1/9, which was 55% higher than last week's first half hour of "Knight Rider." And on Fox, "American Stories" nearly equaled America's pastime, as the 2.7/7 scored 90% of last week's World Series pre-game show.

Clouds part, champs emerge
Fox opted to forgo all but about 11 minutes of the pre-game last night in order to quickly get to the resumption of Game 5, which was delayed Monday night in cold, rainy Philadelphia. Last night the Phillies looked warm and dry -- regardless of the conditions -- as they beat the Tampa Bay Rays 4-3 to win their first World Series since another politician with Illinois roots, Ronald Reagan, was making his pitch to undecided voters before the 1980 election.

Game 5's 6.2/16 was actually 29% higher than last week's Game 1. But the 4.5/12 average was nearly 20% lower than the 5.6/16 for last year's four-game Boston Red Sox booting of the Colorado Rockies.

Fox ended the night and the baseball season with a 3.6/9 for the post-game show, ending a snake-bitten World Series that missed Red Sox nation, or another marquee media market, at least in terms of ratings impact. But despite one Saturday game finishing on Sunday morning, and Game 5 spanning three days due to the bad weather, there was some good news for Fox: Five games, accompanied by high prices for World Series spots, were spread over six nights.

The Phillies weren't the only Wednesday winner: Fox won as well with an overall 4.9/13, well above CBS's 3.0/8, ABC's 2.4/6 and NBC's 2.3/6. The CW finished fifth with a 1.5/4, which was the average once the below-average "Stylista" lost over half of "Top Model"’s lead-in.

Crime time
Outside of the pitches by Obama and Philly reliever Brad Lidge, the rest of the night was split between second-year series and those with a few years of TV time, like CBS's "CSI: NY" (3.3/9), which won the 10 p.m. hour despite dropping 20% from its season average. "CSI" lead-in "Criminal Minds" (3.5/8) also slipped, down 19%, as perhaps some of CBS's more traditional viewers flipped to Fox for the fall classic. And the new timeslot for "Old Christine" didn't help, as last week freshman sitcom "Gary Unmarried" was 8% higher-rated.

The other TV veteran, NBC's "Deal or No Deal" was dealt a 2.3/6 for a 90-minute version, which made it the lowest-rated of the big four networks in the timeslot.

Several sophomore series also ran last night, but compared to "American Stories" most seemed to lack star appeal. NBC fared best, as the gritty Phillies probably drew many males, but seemingly sent 12% more viewers to female-focused "Lipstick Jungle." Yet "Lipstick" still delivered a third-place 1.9/5 at 10 p.m. and now awaits its eventual exile to Friday nights.

ABC ran three second-year shows: Following "Pushing Daisies," ratings for "Private Practice" were down 3% from season averages to a 2.9/7, and 5% less were inclined to spend time with "Dirty Sexy Money" (2.0/5).

All four scripted second-year series face an uncertain future. Then again, so does Barack Obama. But if
everything doesn't go his way next Tuesday, he could always get an agent, just like his new nemesis, Joe the Plumber, did yesterday. Because, regardless of one's political proclivities, his combination of statecraft and stagecraft was as compelling as any content so far this season.

**WHAT TO WATCH:**

**Thursday:** Tina Fey is back on NBC Thursday night, but not as Gov. Sarah Palin on "Weekend Update Thursday," but as Liz Lemon on the season premiere of "30 Rock."

**Friday:** Your front door, as the trick-or-treaters will be more entertaining than anything on TV.

**WHAT TO WATCH FOR:**

Will "30 Rock" 's ratings be as solid as "Weekend Update Thursday?"

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*NOTE: All ratings based on adults 18-49. A share is a percentage of adults 18-49 who have their TV sets on at a given time. A rating is a percentage of all adults 18-49, whether or not their sets are turned on. For example, a 1.0 rating is 1% of the total U.S. adults 18-49 population with TVs. Ratings quoted in this column are based on live-plus-same-day unless otherwise noted. (Many ad deals have been negotiated on the basis of commercial-minute, live-plus-three-days viewing.)*

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