Convention Cheat Sheet: It's a Wrap!

By Chris Cilliza, The Fix

The buildup to Barack Obama's speech was so great, the stakes so high and the setting so dramatic that even some of his staunchest supporters wondered whether he could pull it off.

But by the time the confetti came raining down and the fireworks were launched over Invesco Field, Sen. Barack Obama, the first African American to clinch a presidential nomination, had achieved just about everything he had set out to do.

Among the tasks:

• Further the healing process within his party after a bitter primary battle with Hillary Rodham Clinton.

• Reintroduce -- and in some cases introduce -- himself and his wife to the country in a way that addressed concerns he was an elitist and didn't understand the concerns of average Americans.

• Launch a frontal attack on McCain, challenging the Arizona senator on national security -- a perceived strength for the GOP.

Attention now turns to St. Paul, Minnesota where the Republican National Convention is set to open on Monday (more on that below).

OUTSIDE THE HALL: Even as Obama was preparing to go on stage, various media outlets were reporting that the Republican National Convention might be postponed due to Hurricane Gustav, which is storming toward the Gulf Coast. Such a postponement would be a logistical nightmare, throwing into chaos an event that the party and hundreds of media organizations have been planning for the better part of the last two years. The optics for Republicans, however, are potentially problematic. Partying in Minnesota while a hurricane bears down on the Gulf Coast is a VERY tough juxtaposition for the GOP -- especially in the wake of the Bush Administration's handling of Hurricane Katrina.

INSIDE THE STADIUM: What a spectacle. Whether you liked it or not, it was something to behold. From the stage to the fireworks to the entertainment (Sheryl Crow good, Stevie Wonder only so-so) it was a night to remember. The question is whether Obama and Democrats will remember it as the beginning of something special or the beginning of the end.

BEST GIVEAWAY: The CNN Grill -- a restaurant that the network took over for the week -- has served as the hub for political gathering and gossip. And, for great swag. Among the items in the gift bag: a red CNN hat and a t-shirt that reads "I chowed down at the CNN Grill." Well played, CNN. Well played.

WORST TAKEWAY: The crowd was ready to explode for former Vice President Al Gore -- a hero of the party's left. And, while Gore had some good applause lines ("I believe in recycling but that's ridiculous") he bogged down in the specifics of global warming. It reminded us that Gore is a policy wonk, far more comfortable talking about carbon footprints than polling trends.

PARTY OF THE NIGHT: Google runs the world. So, it's no surprise that their party -- co-sponsored by Vanity Fair -- was THE hottest ticket of the week. Not only were RSVPs required but tickets needed to be picked up at the Ritz Carlton. The wait at times during the day was more than an hour. If you're wondering, yes, The Fix was invited.