

THE OFF THE RECORD CLUB NOW ON THE RECORD, STILL DESPERATE FOR POSITIVE PRESS FOR MCCAIN

I speculated the other day that Bob Novak's Plame leak brokers in the Off the Record Club—specifically, top McCain aides Charlie Black and Ken Duberstein—were using him as a tool again when they leaked that McCain was about to name his running-mate.

Well, lo and behold, guess who's now on the record, once again pitching an imminent announcement of McCain's running mate?

Anxious to counter the blanket media coverage that has followed Sen. Barack Obama on his overseas journey, Sen. John McCain is weighing whether to announce his running mate in the coming weeks before the spotlight shifts to China and the opening of the Olympic Games next month.

"He's in a position to make [the decision] on short notice if he wanted to," **said Charles R. Black Jr., one of McCain's top political advisers.**

Two top aides to the presumptive Republican nominee said the decision is likely to be announced after Obama returns from Europe on Sunday and before the Beijing Olympics begin Aug. 8. They said the campaign fears that unanticipated events coming out of China — whether in the form of athletic accomplishments or human rights protests — could deflect attention from the announcement if it were made during the

Games. [my emphasis]

And if you compare this on the record story with what Novak was told—"they didn't want it to come out the way it was going to come out"—both stories seem designed to pressure McCain not to announce his running mate when he currently plans to announce.

Many Republicans say the traditional time frame for an announcement — the days leading up to the GOP convention — is not practical this year, because the Democratic convention ends so soon before the Republican gathering. It's unlikely, they said, that McCain would announce his pick the day after Obama gives his convention speech.

And several McCain aides said they oppose the idea of making a vice presidential announcement during the Olympics.

That, and I'm sure Charlie Black and friends are desperate to get whathisname back in the press, now that Obama's sucking up all the media's attention. How many more times do you think Charlie Black is going to try this ploy, before someone labels him the Boy Who Cried "Veep!"?