

I GUESS YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE FIRED BITNEY, HUH?

Here's the guy I'd like to interview Friday morning: John Bitney.

You'll recall this WSJ article explaining that the McCain team realized they were using normal methods to prepare seasoned candidates for debate, which wasn't working for Palin.

More broadly, the McCain campaign aims to halt what it sees as a perceived decline in the crispness and precision of Gov. Palin's latest remarks as well as a fall in recent polls, according to several advisers and party officials.

McCain officials denied any problems inside the campaign. "The nature of political campaigns, with all their ups and downs, is for insiders and outsiders and no-siders to register complaints, often anonymously," said Tucker Eskew, a counselor for Gov. Palin. "We all in this campaign understand that, and we're not distracted by it, even as we welcome well-intentioned and good advice."

Some prominent Republicans and senior members of Congress have expressed worries about certain facets of the Palin campaign, particularly that Gov. Palin may be "overprepared" and not encouraged to be herself, an adviser said.

"She hasn't had the time or inclination to question the judgments of the people telling her to hit her marks," said one Republican strategist. "Gov. Palin is a team player, but the campaign needs to adjust to a game plan that works for her."

[snip]

Meanwhile, the more experienced advisers assigned to her by the McCain campaign are accustomed to working with seasoned candidates, not someone "completely green on the national stage," one strategist said. Several Republican backers have griped that the campaign has put the candidate in difficult situations, from sitting for high-profile television interviews to popping into meetings with foreign leaders, some of whom made sexist remarks, said several officials.

"It's time to let Palin be Palin – and let it all hang out," said Scott Reed, a Republican strategist. [my emphasis]

And along with the entire Palin family, they've shipped in one of Sarah's own staffers.

Also, a key Alaska staffer joined the Palin operation Sunday.

It makes sense, right? Faced with the realization that you've got to let Sarah be Sarah, that you've got to replicate what she did in Alaska rather than prep her like you'd prep a Hillary Clinton or a Susan Collins, you bring in the staffers who prepped her for her very successful gubernatorial debates, right?

No.

Turns out, the guy that prepped her for those debates is one of the guys Todd Palin had fired because of a personal issue (Bitney was dating the ex-wife of one of Todd's best friends).

John Bitney, the policy director for her campaign for governor and the main person who helped prepare her for debates, said her repetition of words was "her way of running down the clock as her mind searches for where she wants to go."

That's not to say some other Alaskan can't prep Sarah just as well. But I would imagine Bitney is going to have an interesting time watching the debate tomorrow night.