



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 4, 2010

## “Hurt Locker” Hit by Flak Before Oscars

If you have not yet had the opportunity to watch Mark Boal’s *Hurt Locker*, you are depriving yourself of a powerful cinematic experience. Apparently, the awards committee for the Academy agrees considering the movie has been nominated for several awards, most notably, best picture. Unfortunately for producer Nicholas Chartier, if the movie receives the coveted award, he will not be present to witness the event.



The executive committee of the producers’ branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences determined that Nicholas Chartier was not allowed to attend Sunday’s Academy Awards when Chartier violated Oscar rules by emailing academy members for their support of *Hurt Locker*. On February 19, Chartier’s email asked academy members to support *Hurt Locker* and “not a \$500 million film,” alluding, of course, to best-picture nominee *Avatar*. Subsequent emails from Chartier urged Oscar voters to rank *Avatar* last in the lineup of 10 best-picture films and place *Hurt Locker* at the top of the list.

Chartier’s emails violate rules that bar nominees from endorsing a film and criticizing another. In response to his penalty, Chartier has sent an apologetic email accepting his consequence. “My naïveté, ignorance of the rules and plain stupidity as a first-time nominee is not an excuse for this behavior and I strongly regret it,” Chartier wrote. Fortunately for *Hurt Locker*, Chartier’s behavior does not eliminate the film from the list of contenders for the acclaimed best-picture award. Chartier will receive the award at a later date in the event that *Hurt Locker* wins. All other producers for the film are welcome at the awards ceremony.

Despite Chartier’s competitiveness with *Avatar*, *Hurt Locker* has truly commanded the accolade of Hollywood guilds and trade groups, comprised of directors, writers, and producers. At the British Academy Film Awards, which took place last month, *Hurt Locker* edged out *Avatar*, winning six prizes, including best picture. At the Golden Globe Awards, however, *Avatar* claimed the Golden Globe for best drama over *Hurt Locker*.

The Chartier incident is just one of a few that have attracted negative attention for the film. Rumors and speculation that the film was based on Master Sergeant Jeffrey S. Sarver prompted Sarver to file a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the film. Mark Boal, the screenwriter, asserts that the film is



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fictional. Boal's experiences as a journalist in Baghdad alongside a U.S. Army bomb squad was the basis for the film, and is what inspired the realism in the heart-pounding drama.

Sarver's claims contradict former accusations from war veterans that the film was not accurate enough. Evidently, the film is so precise that Sarver believes it to be about himself. Sarver hired Jack Kevorkian's former lawyer Geoffrey Fieger as representation in the lawsuit.

Julian Sancton of *Vanity Fair* argues that *Hurt Locker* is the target of a smear campaign, since it is believed to be the frontrunner at the Oscars. He compares it to a similar incident involving Matt Damon in 1998. Days before voting, a story in *Variety* appeared claiming that Ted Tally had written the highly acclaimed *Good Will Hunting*, when in fact it was written by Damon himself.

Hopefully the attempted "smear campaign" has not done permanent damage. This year's nominees for best picture may all be deserving, but any film that powerfully and accurately depicts the strife of our brave American soldiers surpasses all other contenders in my book. I guess we have to wait and see if the Academy agrees.

*Photo of Mark Boal: AP Images*



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