This year's Oscar Awards look to be the wildest we've seen in years. First and foremost is the decision to open up the Best Picture race to ten films. But that's not enough wildness for them, so the voting has been changed to a very complex forumula.

Instead of just voting for the movie they think is best, voters instead are asked to rank the movies from 1 to 10. If no movie has more than 50% of the first place votes, the movie with the least amount of #1 votes would be eliminated, and all of their votes would then go to the film ranked #2 on their list. If that re-allocation doesn't result in a winner, the process is repeated for the next lowest vote getter, until a movie finally crosses the 50% mark.

Confused? Can't say that I blame you. The gist of it is that a movie could end up winning based not upon having more initial #1 votes, but by having more #2 and #3 votes.

So what does that really mean? I think it might be bad news for "Avatar" and "The Hurt Locker",

as supporters of those two films have one thing in common; they really HATE the other film…enough so that I could see many “Avatar” fanatics ranking “The Hurt Locker” at #10 and vice-versa. This will, I think, lead to the winning picture being something other than the two I just mentioned. We’ll get to that later.

Earlier this week, I recapped the four films I think are in true contention for Best Picture, as well as re-running my review of “The Blind Side”. So let’s quickly touch base on the other five.

Up – Pixar has done it again with this surprisingly touching film about an octogenarian honoring the memory of his late wife by tying thousands of balloons to his house and flying to South America, toting with him a young boy scout. I don’t really think this film is as good as other Pixar films such as “Wall-E”, “Ratatouille”, or “The Incredibles” but it is worthy of this nomination, and will definitely win “Best Animated Feature”.

District 9 – A bit of a surprising pick, as most “experts” expected “Star Trek” to be the sci-fi film nominated (yes, “Avatar” could be considered sci-fi, but I think it’s more of a fantasy film). But this film deserves its spot due to the originality of the film itself, and as a reward for Peter Jackson taking a chance with a novice director Neill Blomkamp on this low budget film that took in over $100 million.

Precious – No, I have no intention of doing the entire “based upon the novel…blah, blah, blah” that everyone else does. This was an OK movie, but it was just one that struck me as something that I was being told that I HAD to like and admire. I’m not an Oprah hater by any stretch of the imagination, but I was getting tired of being told by Oprah and the like how important and great this film was. It’s a good film, but by no stretch of the imagination is it a great one.

A Serious Man – I am one of those who think that the Coen Brothers are highly overrated. Yes, they have made some good movies, top amongst them was “Fargo” and “O Brother, Where Art Thou”, but they remind me of Steven Soderberg…directors who have taken their success as a permit to make questionably entertaining movies under the guise of “art”. This movie did nothing for me, and I would have definitely put “Invictus”, “A Single Man”, or “The Road” in this slot.

An Education – Might be my favorite of the "other five" films. Well earned nomination from young Carey Mulligan as a teenage girl coming of age in 1960s London. But I get the feeling this will be the first film eliminated in the new voting system.

That's the recap, now let's get on with my predictions. Last year, I was 7 for 8 on my picks in the major category, missing only on Best Actor, as I had picked Mickey Rourke over winner Sean Penn.

Best Supporting Actor:

The nominees: Matt Damon for "Invictus", Woody Harrelson for "The Messenger", Christopher Plummer for "The Last Station", Stanley Tucci for "The Lovely Bones", and Christoph Waltz for "Inglourious Basterds

Overlooked in this category: Kodi Smit-McPhee in "The Road", Anthony Mackie in "The Hurt Locker"

My Preference: Christoph Waltz

My Guess for Winning: Christoph Waltz

Details: Just like last year with Heath Ledger, this is the biggest slam dunk of the evening.

Best Supporting Actress:

The nominees: Penelope Cruz for "Nine", Vera Farmiga for "Up in the Air", Maggie Gyllenhaal for "Crazy Heart", Anna Kendrick for "Up in the Air", Mo'Nique for "Precious"

Overlooked in this Category: Sigourney Weaver for “Avatar”, Julianne Moore for “A Single Man”, Mélanie Laurent for “Inglourious Basterds”

My Preference: Vera Farmiga

My Guess for Winning: Mo’Nique

Details: Probably another slam dunk, as Farmiga and Kendrick will cancel each other out. Personally, I think Laurent should have won, but she wasn’t even nominated.

Best Actress:

The nominees: Sandra Bullock for “The Blind Side”, Helen Mirren for “The Last Station”, Carey Mulligan for “An Education”, Gabourey Sidibe for “Precious”, Meryl Streep for “Julie & Julia”.

Overlooked in this Category: Camron Diaz for “My Sister’s Keeper”, Emily Blunt, “The Young Victoria”

My Preference: Meryl Streep

My Guess for Winning: Sandra Bullock

Details: I think Bullock would be a deserving winner…and in truth, she was a lot more essential to her movie than Streep was in hers…but Streep is simply a better actress, and it wouldn’t surprise me at all if she won.

Best Actor:

The nominees: Jeff Bridges for “Crazy Heart”, George Clooney for “Up in the Air”, Colin Firth for “A Single Man”, Morgan Freeman for “Invictus”, Jeremy Renner for “The Hurt Locker”

Overlooked in this category: Viggo Mortensen for “The Road”, Russell Crowe for “State of Play”.

My Preference: George Clooney

My Guess for Winning: Jeff Bridges

Details: Another no-drama choice, from where it looks from here. Oscar loves giving lifetime achievement awards (see also, Henry Fonda and John Wayne), and this looks like the boozy loser role that Oscar also loves, so Bridges will finally win.

Best Adapted Screenplay:

The nominees: “District 9”, “An Education”, “In the Loop”, “Precious”, “Up in the Air”

Overlooked in the Category: “The Road”, “State of Play”

My Preference: “Up in the Air”

My Guess for Winning: “Up in the Air”

Details: Overall, it's going to be a disappointing evening for what I thought was the best film of the year; but Jason Reitman will take some solace in winning this award.

Best Original Screenplay:

The nominees: "The Hurt Locker", "Inglourious Basterds", "The Messenger", "A Serious Man", "Up"

Overlooked in the Category: "Avatar"

My Preference: "Inglourious Basterds"

My Guess for Winning: "Inglourious Basterds"

Details: I think the Academy will reward Quentin Tarantino for his body of work with this award, although I'd say that he deserves it on his own anyway

Best Director:

The nominees: Kathryn Bigelow for "The Hurt Locker", James Cameron for "Avatar", Lee Daniels for "Precious", Jason Reitman for "Up in the Air", Quentin Tarantino for "Inglourious Basterds"

Overlooked in the Category: Clint Eastwood for "Invictus"

My Preference: Jason Reitman

My Guess for Winning: Kathryn Bigelow

Details: I think there is a backlash developing against “Avatar” by the Academy voters, and we’ll see it manifest itself in the selection of Cameron’s ex-wife for Best Director.

Best Picture:

The nominees: “Avatar”, “The Hurt Locker”, “Inglourious Basterds”, “Up in the Air”, “The Blind Side”, “Up”, “District 9”, “An Education”, “Precious”, “A Serious Man”.

Overlooked in the Category: “Invictus”, “Star Trek”, “A Single Man”

My Preference: “Up in the Air”

My Guess for Winning: “Inglourious Basterds”

Details: Tarantino will reap the benefit of the (somewhat incomprehensible) hatred of “Avatar”, as well as backlash against the producer of “The Hurt Locker” who was banned from tonight’s show due to the unethical trashing he was doing towards “Avatar”. Personally, I think any of these three are deserving, as is “Up in the Air”…which may be the one taking advantage of the Avatar vs Hurt Locker fight instead of “Basterds”, and winning the award. As stated in Friday’s Crystal Ball, I have never been as unsure of the winner as what I am this year.

Other Picks:

Best Documentary: “Food, Inc”

Best Foreign Language Film: “The White Ribbon”

Best Animated Film: “Up”

Best Visual Effects: “Avatar”

Best Original Song: “The Weary Kind”, from “Crazy Heart”

Best Musical Score: “Avatar”

Best Makeup: “Star Trek”

Best Costume Design: “The Young Victoria”

Best Art Direction: “Avatar”

Best Editing: “The Hurt Locker”

Best Cinematography: “Inglourious Basterds”

Those are my guesses…stay tuned next Friday on “The Crystal Ball” when I’ll either be bragging on myself, or else eating some major amounts of crow.