



# HOW A POKER NOVEL BECOMES A FEATURE FILM

By John Blowers

## HOBNOBBING AT ANTE UP FOR AFRICA AND TRYING TO FIND A DIRECTOR

**Editor's Note:** This is the fourth in a series by John Blowers about the struggle to get his book, *Life on Tilt*, made into a movie.

**WHEN** one is developing the definitive poker-themed movie, one must go to poker's mecca...The World Series of Poker. Today I find myself registering for the Ante Up for Africa tournament. For the uninitiated, this is a celebrity-filled turbo event. Since I haven't started raising money for the film yet, the \$5,000 buy-in is precisely \$5,000 more than I have available, but to quote a line from my novel *Life on Tilt*... "Taking calculated risks is risky, not taking them is pointless."

I plunk down my 50 dimes and start to make my way toward the red carpet when I am stopped by a security guard. I flash my seat card and the man gently informs me the red carpet is reserved for important people (subtext: "and you're not").

I turn to speak to my friend, Humberto Brenes, for a few moments, then return to the same guard and ask, "Where's my escort to the red carpet? I'm running late!" Unbelievably, he apologizes and scurries to find someone to walk me back to the celebrity area. Those well-timed bluffs at the poker table are starting to pay extra dividends!

Next I am part of approximately 200 media from around the world mixing

with the likes of Matt Damon, Sarah Silverman, Montel Williams and Cedric the Entertainer. I work my way toward the VIP entrance and pose with the Jack Links' sasquatch before shaking hands with WSOP Media Director Nolan Dalla.

It is soon my turn to parade past the global media. The line gets backed up for an awkwardly long time when I turn to the person next to me and ask, somewhat sheepishly, "Are you someone important?" When he replies, "No, are you?" I tell him I'm not. It turns out this unassuming young man is Isaac Haxton, who came in second in the \$40,000 buy-in event, winning more than \$1.1 million. We reach out to a photographer and implore her to take our picture because "we're two unimportant people!"

Moving through the line with Nelly,

Mike Tyson and Charles Barkley proves to be a surreal experience. I try to stay out of the way of the real stars and manage to knock over one of the huge spotlights toward the back of the walkway. Way to stay below the radar, John. The tournament is a bit of a circus as media are scattered everywhere and officials are repeatedly trying to clear the playing area to start the event. Several hundred fans have jammed the rail to see their favorite celebrity and grab a few autographs. I'm happy to have a small cheering section from New York who just happened to coincidentally be in Vegas.

### SUPERMAN ON MY LEFT

About 45 minutes after the tournament is scheduled to start, I take my seat at the table next to none other than Superman

