



Photography Hayden Browne

# A sign of the times

by Janine Browne

## The demise of spectator sport

Companies with big advertising budgets, and their big signs, are being given priority positioning over spectators at sporting events.

This is the conclusion I came to when I attended a rugby game recently. Anticipating a close up view of the game, my jaw dropped simultaneously with my butt into my front row seat. Heads! That's all I could see—players heads! There was the usual boundary fence advertising but another barrier had been erected along the boundary lines of the field—about 1 metre high, cutting the players off at about ear level. Considering much of the game is played at ground level in scrums, there was no sport to watch.

If I stood up I'd block the view of those behind me, so I turned to fellow spectators for clues as to how you barrack for a team you can't see. Then I got it. If you're seated in the front row or up to about four rows back, the giant TV screen becomes the playing field and . . . you guessed it, you're subjected to advertising in the breaks.

Now you'd hope the physical activity would motivate spectators to dust the joggers off but if you take the view that obesity is a sign of commercial success, food advertising at sporting events ensures that spectators taste buds are more likely to get a workout than their bodies.

Check out article 21 'Has sport lost its soul—have you lost your mind?'