

ACROSS THE  
TASMAN  
**BRETT MCKAY**



## AN ETERNAL FLAME

**Sometimes Brett Mackay wonders if he is only dreaming – a sportswriter in a world where every sport is seemingly committed to an endless season, where Super Rugby and the Cricket World Cup play out side by side.**

**I** don't mind admitting I've got one of the better jobs going, and that there are certainly more arduous vocations in the world than writing and talking about sport for a living.

I mean, I could mount a spirited defence about how the time management, and the constant search for new angles, and the occasional travel, and the need to avoid the same word all the time, is all very challenging, but you'd rightly just come back with, "Brett, you get paid to watch sport."

As a cricket and rugby writer and sometime commentator, my year used to be pretty simple. Rugby started in mid-February, and went through to November for the northern tours, by which stage it was time to start watching cricket again over the summer.

Then rugby tours started to run longer, cricket tours started earlier, and we now find ourselves in this weird situation where all the football codes are getting ready to go again – notwithstanding that the A-League and the Asian Cup are and were played over summer – but we've still got two months of cricket to come in our part of the world.

By the time the first match of the Cricket World Cup started, three Super Rugby matches had been played in three different countries. Cricket and rugby fans in Brisbane literally had to be in two places at once on February 21, with Australia taking

on Bangladesh at the Gabba, and the Reds hosting the Western Force at Suncorp Stadium.

The NRL season proper will commence with the Cricket World Cup quarterfinals still another fortnight away. By the time the cricket final comes around on March 29, we'll be into round four of the NRL, and round seven of Super Rugby.

It just seems to be the way modern sport is scheduled these days. All. The. Bloody. Time.

International cricket has become a 12-month sport, to the point that it was a rare thing last year when the Australian side actually didn't play anyone between getting bungled out of the World Twenty20 in early April, and touring Zimbabwe for a triangular one-day tournament in late August.

In 2015, they'll tour the Caribbean for two tests in June, before following your Black Caps to England, where the Ashes will again be contested for what feels like the 10th time in four years. The AFL will be mid-season by this

point, and Richmond fans will already be nervous. A coach somewhere will

probably already have "left the club with our warmest wishes for the future".

Around the same time the Ashes tests commence, Super Rugby will have been decided, and The Rugby Championship will be getting ready to kick off, while Queenslanders will be hoping their one and only State of Origin match in 2015 – game three, on July 8 – isn't a dead rubber.

Then, while all the footy finals are on, our cricketers are off to Bangladesh for two tests in October, the first time the two teams have faced off since Jason Gillespie's unbeaten double hundred back in April 2006.

October, though, isn't there something else on around then?

Yes, that would be that little quadrennial carnival known as the Rugby World Cup, which you lovely people will be hoping to defend, while we on this side of the ditch will be sweating on still being alive by the second week of October.

Once our two teams face off in the final at Twickers – best of luck, by the way – it will only be a matter of weeks before our respective cricket teams face off to commence the 2015/2016 summer. And quite possibly under lights, if the pink ball trials go well.

It's like our favourite sports don't dare remain out of the spotlight for any great length of time. Whether that's fuelled by a desire to dominate the constant news cycle these days, or whether it's a more paranoid fear that a fan of one sport will be lost forever if they dare watch another, I don't know. Whatever it is, it's bloody great for sports fans. If you want to watch your favourite team, you really don't need to worry about mere details like off-seasons and the like any more. In the words of sporting comedians "Rampaging" Roy Slaven and HG Nelson, "Too much sport is barely enough."

But won't somebody, please, think of the sportswriters? ☹

