

102. The 100 Sporting Events You Must See Live

Over here in the States I found a book of the above title by Robert Tuchman. He works in the sports travel industry for over 10 years and thus attended many of the 100 events he goes on to describe. He got the idea when he was in Germany for the 2006 World Cup. He said people travelled from all over the world for such an event. He proceeded to write a book that describes the event, where it is, when it is, the significance, who attends, it's history, Notable Athletes or MVP's, records, things to know before you go, how to get there, tickets, accommodation, on-site hospitality, travel packages, dining, airports, giving the sports travel insiders edge, notable quotes, and relevant websites. It's a pretty comprehensive guide and so I looked for some I might catch while I am here, and ones that Australia has.

I was a little surprised at some points on the list and thought, I have to get Knackers a chance to rate their top 10 world events. I'll give you the top 10 of Tuchman's list, and then point out a few other familiar events and their ranking.

1. Masters
2. World Cup
3. Super Bowl
4. Summer Olympics
5. Army vs Navy Football Game (ok, you have to be local American to get this one)
6. New York City Marathon
7. World Series
8. Winter Olympics
9. Red Sox vs Yankees at Yankee Stadium (if he'd said Fenway I would have got a tick.)
10. UNC vs Duke Basketball Game at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

I was with him with for the first five, and acknowledge that it is an American book, written by an American author for an American market. So if he wants people to see the events in their own country, he's on the right track. The rankings though, felt strange.

Here are some more notables:

11. Wimbledon
13. Tour de France
15. Liverpool vs Manchester United at Old Trafford
19. Daytona 500
24. Kentucky Derby
27. British Open
31. Indy 500
33. Dubai World Cup
36. Running of the Bulls
45. Special Olympics

And so forth until the surprise for me:

57. Kangaroos Australian Football Game.

Now, I apologise in advance to any North Melbourne supporters but if you are going to recommend someone to Australian Rules Football (not Australian Football Game), surely you have to go for the MCG Grand Final in the “Insider’s Guide to Creating the Sports Experience of a Lifetime”. Or at least a Dream Time Game or an ANZAC Day game, where the MCG is full and you get that truly magnificent sporting experience that the AFL has to offer. On the other hand, as Tevye from “Fiddler on the Roof” said, on the other hand, you can always guarantee a ticket for a North Melbourne game, with one of the smallest supporter bases and attendances, you’d be in like Flynn.

Now how did this author land on the Kangaroos? Was it the name, so Australian, so stereotypical? Was it his Australian friends playing tricks and taking him to a game and telling him that this was the best there was to see?

Surely, if you want to give someone a travel experience, you have to put them in a Carlton jumper and put them in the middle of a Collingwood crowd. The combinations would be endless, and the game would be memorable.

Now, my nose was further put out that the race that stops the nation didn’t get a mention, even though Channel Ten always tells us it is enjoyed around the world. Can’t I believe Channel Ten anymore?

The only other Australian event mentioned was the Australian Open Tennis Tournament. At least the Kangaroos were mentioned before the Backyard Brawl in Morgantown (this is when the Pittsburgh Panthers meet the West Virginia University Mountaineers and a literal “back yard brawl ensues”. This, according to my book, is the oldest and most intense college football rivalries which began in 1895.) I am in Morgantown as I write this, and it doesn’t play out til late October, so I will miss this gripping event.

The Kangas were also mentioned before the Westminster Dog Show (93), where dog’s owners from around the world come to Madison Square Garden to display their dogs. Apparently the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show is the second-oldest continuous sporting event in America. Only the Kentucky Derby has it beat by two years. Go Kentucky Derby. I will see the site but not the event, over the next weeks.

Ranked at 99 is the Little League World Series. I was lucky enough to pass this venue in Williamsport two days ago, and visited, and was touched by the fabulous ground and the even better museum displaying the history. I actually bought this year’s program, because a Perth team had entered, and won the hearts of their hosts when they lent their gear to another visiting club when the airlines misplaced all their uniforms and equipment. I think the guide said the Perth Club actually were awarded a medal for their actions. I had been in tears watching the film, seeing kids, boys and girls and of every colour, playing this game, learning life’s lessons, and, like our Auskick, having families coaching, organising, supporting on the day.

So how many had I seen, live, of these events? I’ve seen a game of the Kangas, I have seen a game at the famous Fenway Park (55), and I have been to the Australian Open (84). I have also seen, somewhere back in my life, the Harlem Globetrotters live, and their performance was ranked 86 on the list.

So Knackers, it wouldn't be hard to beat my measly 4? Perhaps Glenn Brownstein will take me to the 65 which is the Midnight Madness at University of Kentucky and I'll get to 5 before my trip is over.

For the full list of 100, go to <http://www.topendsports.com/events/top100.htm>

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