

ASA decision an early April Fool's joke?

The Advertising Standards Authority has banned the Sasol rugby ad for misrepresenting the origins of the game.

The ad depicts a contest between mediaeval villagers that resembles the modern day game. Evidently the ASA felt that the sub-title "1247 AD" and the voice-over saying "This is how the game began..." was misleading the consumer.

Even if the ad is historically and factually incorrect, what about creative licence? The sub-title and voice-over could simply be setting the scene for a hypothetical scenario.

As far as I know historians are still debating the real origins of the game, so who is the ASA to rule on the historicity of it anyway?

When I first read about the ruling I thought it was an April Fool's joke come early. How could anyone object to that ad? But evidently a Mr Cunningham felt strongly about it and, as usual, all it took was one whimsical complaint for the ASA to start red-penning.

The current ruling process is flawed and is damaging creativity within the industry. Time and money is wasted on considering the merits of a single complaint. It should be fairly obvious if the general public takes exception to an ad. Surely it makes more sense to react only if there have been a certain number of complaints from various individuals?

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