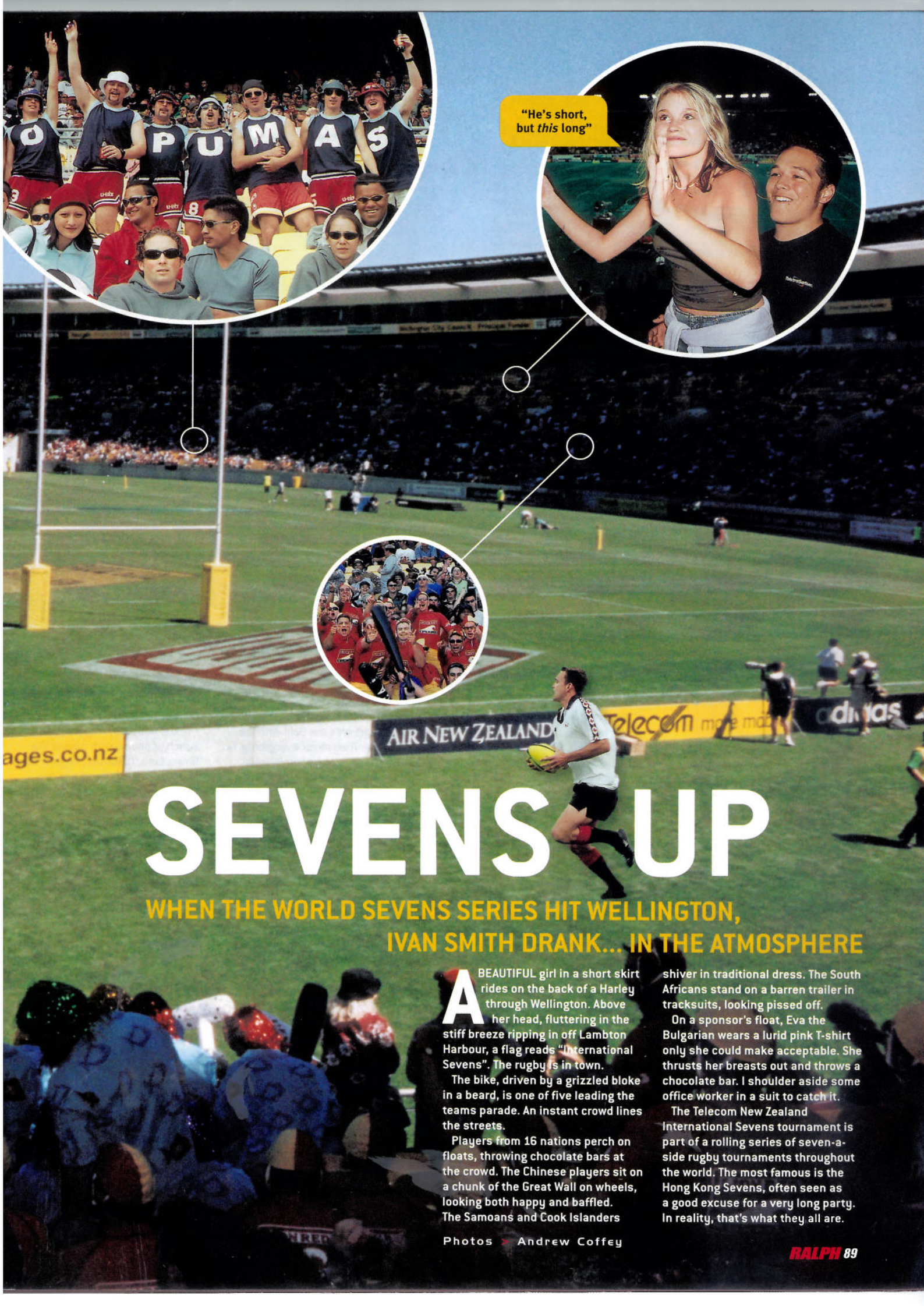
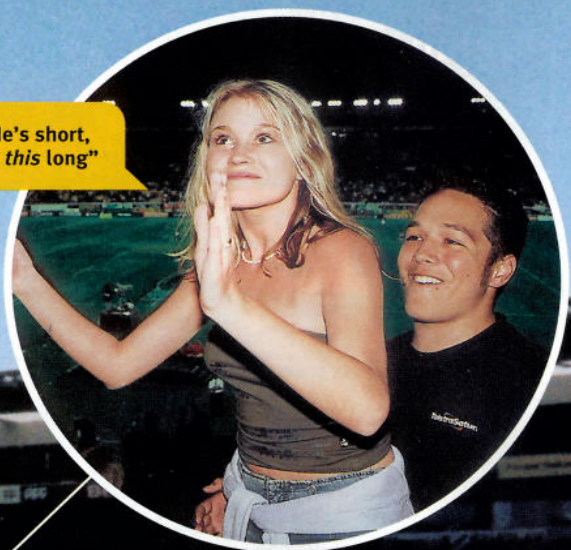




"He's short, but *this* long"



SEVENS UP

WHEN THE WORLD SEVENS SERIES HIT WELLINGTON,
IVAN SMITH DRANK... IN THE ATMOSPHERE

A BEAUTIFUL girl in a short skirt rides on the back of a Harley through Wellington. Above her head, fluttering in the stiff breeze ripping in off Lambton Harbour, a flag reads "International Sevens". The rugby is in town.

The bike, driven by a grizzled bloke in a beard, is one of five leading the teams parade. An instant crowd lines the streets.

Players from 16 nations perch on floats, throwing chocolate bars at the crowd. The Chinese players sit on a chunk of the Great Wall on wheels, looking both happy and baffled. The Samoans and Cook Islanders

shiver in traditional dress. The South Africans stand on a barren trailer in tracksuits, looking pissed off.

On a sponsor's float, Eva the Bulgarian wears a lurid pink T-shirt only she could make acceptable. She thrusts her breasts out and throws a chocolate bar. I shoulder aside some office worker in a suit to catch it.

The Telecom New Zealand International Sevens tournament is part of a rolling series of seven-a-side rugby tournaments throughout the world. The most famous is the Hong Kong Sevens, often seen as a good excuse for a very long party. In reality, that's what they all are.

Photos > Andrew Coffey