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The daffodils are flowering and we are enjoying the first week of warm sunshine in 2014. Should we need any further evidence that spring is upon us, Sunday's Australian Grand Prix – the opening race in this year's Formula One season – is official confirmation. It coincides with a surge in morale amongst the Australian sporting public, which has seen its cricket team win the Ashes 5-0 and

then travel to South Africa to beat the best Test team in the world. I fear a return to those insufferable days of the 1990s when our Australian friends delighted in reminding us of their superiority at every opportunity. Indeed, only last week I received a letter from Sydney bearing a stamp – deliberately chosen I'm certain – which showed off the victorious Australian cricket team.

Sebastian Vettel might feel differently, but most people connected to Formula One will be hoping for a proper contest this season after last year's championship was decided with four races to go. It was little more than a procession, which was labelled as 'boring' by many. This is often the case when one supremely skilled competitor dominates his sport to the exclusion of everyone else, and Formula One has responded to the negative impact of Vettel's supremacy by introducing double points to the final race of the season.

He has called it absurd, because it is precisely the sort of panicky, desperate measure that sporting bodies resort to when they detect even a whiff of repetitiveness.

'We've got to make it more interesting', they cry before introducing something entirely artificial.

Cricket is forever tinkering with the 50 overs format, even to the extent of introducing substitutes for a while. Substitutes! In cricket! It was a farcical knee-jerk reaction when the simple answer to the problem of predictability and declining excitement is to play less of it. That, of course, is unthinkable. Similarly,

football's playoffs produce end-of-season excitement, but can result in the third-placed team in the league missing out on promotion to the one that came 6th.

The indications are that Formula One could be a much closer competition this season

because Vettel's Red Bull have suffered problems as they struggle to adapt to the new energy-recovery engines and the rule which limits the amount of fuel that can be used. And yet the integrity of the 2014 F1 championship is now threatened by an unnecessary end-of-season gimmick. When will sports administrators learn?

***'The
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