



Don't sit me with home fans at away matches...let me feel comfortable to cheer on my team

Martin is a diehard football fan. He loves his club, and goes to every home game. He says, "The atmosphere is amazing. Win or lose, it's addictive - no other word for it! That feeling, surrounded by other fans...you can't explain it, because there's nothing else like it. The exhilaration keeps you going back to the stadium. You can have the biggest, flashiest flat screen in the world, but watching a match on TV won't come close to being there, to being part of it all. I'm excited from the time I leave home, and it builds and builds until the teams run out. Then we're all on tenterhooks! Afterwards, I think about it for days..."

Martin shares his passion for his team with his Dad, who accompanies him to games. Neither of them want to miss a match, but Martin's told his Dad not to bother taking him to some away games any more. The reason? At too many clubs, disabled fans have to sit with the home fans, because there aren't any, or enough, accessible seats in the away section.

Martin says, "It's just not worth it, you know. You can't wear your team stuff, because it could start trouble. Once I didn't know I'd be with the home fans until I got there, and I was wearing my football shirt... This kid said, "What's he doing here? Why doesn't he go up the other end?" And I wanted to say, "I don't want me in here either, you know!"



Surrounded by home fans, Martin feels like an outsider. He can't relax and enjoy the game. He can't cheer on his team. Instead of revelling in his usual excitement, he attempts to blend in with the home fans to avoid any hostility. He can't celebrate when his team scores. He can't even shout at them when they mess up! And he certainly doesn't want to show disappointment should the home team score, or worse, win. Martin couldn't have any more loyalty for his team, but when he's in this position, he feels like he's betraying them. He says, "Who'd want to remember that for days afterwards?"

Martin wonders how many more times he and his Dad will miss out on the thrill of an away game, just because disabled fans can't sit where they belong - with all the other away fans who would never be asked to sit in the home seats.