

I'm wearing yellow, please don't see red!

by Shannon Dixon

The Coloured Vest Program is a simple initiative getting good results.

We know that referees, umpires and others who officiate are vital to sport. Without them, we simply couldn't play.

But more and more in recent years, their involvement in officiating, along with personal safety and enjoyment, has been put at risk by abusive players, coaches and spectators.

This is particularly disturbing when the official is a young person.

There are fewer 'uglier' scenes in sport than a young referee being yelled at and berated by players and unruly spectators.

Industry and government are working on a wide range of strategies to put a stop to the bad behaviour. One of the

newer initiatives is the Coloured Vest Program (CVP).

"The Coloured Vest Program aims to make all beginner officials easily recognisable," says Bruce Drake, Senior Project Officer with NSW Sport and Recreation.

"Officials wear a brightly coloured yellow vest identifying them as a learner official.

"By doing this, we hope that players, spectators and others will understand their inexperience and be more tolerant of mistakes," said Mr Drake.

As part of the CVP, beginner officials are also mentored during their training to further assist them cope with any harassment or abuse.

Launched in NSW last year, the CVP is based on the successful South Australian *Green Shirt Program*. Initial NSW pilot programs have targeted 12 to 14 year old referees who control games of younger children. Feedback has been extremely good and there are now plans to expand CVP across NSW sporting clubs.

CVP is easy to adopt and free-of-charge.

Sporting clubs just register for the CVP with NSW Sport and Recreation. Clubs then receive a CVP pack, containing five vests, lanyards, posters, cards and a variety of educational material. NSW Sport and Recreation provides ongoing support to the club while they implement CVP and asks for feedback on its success.



Coloured Vest Program – free to all NSW sporting clubs

Information:
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Phone 9006 3700
Email bdrake@dsrc.nsw.gov.au
or visit www.dsrc.nsw.gov.au/sportpage/sr_coloured_vest.htm



Case study: City of Orange Touch Association

- 2,000 players in junior and senior divisions
- One of the biggest affiliates outside Sydney
- Junior season: September-December, Senior season: September-March

Mandy Moore, President

"We had a few little problems with players and parents having their say to our junior refs and thought this (CVP) might be a way of controlling it.

"We got all our junior refs to wear the yellow vest.....some were not keen, as they felt it made them stand out too much, but others didn't mind.

"The refs were given a quick briefing.....and parents and spectators were told what was happening via signs in the sign-on shed and over the PA system.

"The response from coaches and parents was very welcoming.....it made them think twice before they gave a ref any problems.

"Some of the kids felt more empowered and protected wearing the vest. Some started to use it in our senior division.

"We will continue with the vest for sure. We all know that every sport has trouble getting and keeping refs, so anything we can do to help this is most welcomed.

"We feel lots more associations and clubs should adopt this program. If more used it, it wouldn't matter what sport you went to, everyone would know that the kids or adults in the vest are learners.

"Supporters demand a lot of referees in any sport, if they are made aware that these 'vest' refs are learners, they may just ease up a bit."