

## LYSA TOPSoccer Volunteer Information



**“Our son loves playing soccer...he is always excited for practice and games. Special kids like him need an opportunity to share that they are capable of being part of society and having athletic opportunities is a key part. A healthy body is needed by all and certainly playing soccer gives him a great way to improve his health. He always comes home hot and sweaty from practice”**  
**-Parents of an athlete**

***The History of TOPSoccer.*** US Youth Soccer, the nation’s largest youth sports organization, started TOPSoccer in 1991 to provide young players with disabilities an environment filled with meaningful learning, developmental and physical participation opportunities through the game of soccer. TOPSoccer is a Lexington Youth Soccer, Kentucky Youth Soccer and US Youth Soccer official program.



***What is LYSA TOPSoccer?*** TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer) is a community-based program designed to meet the needs of athletes 4 and older with physical and cognitive disabilities. Player participation and development are key elements of the program. TOPSoccer is designed to improve the player’s overall fitness, self-esteem and social skills. In short, TOPSoccer takes kids from the sidelines to participating in the game. Our goal is to provide physical exercise, team membership, and opportunities to develop social skills, provide a network for parents with families of similar life experiences, and allow athletes to learn about soccer and develop soccer skills.

***Who is eligible to play in the TOPSoccer league?*** Individuals with disabilities aged 4+. Disabilities might include but are not limited to: ADD/ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down syndrome, Learning Disability, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Developmental Delay, vision or hearing impaired, Muscular Dystrophy, Cerebral Palsy and Hyperactivity Disorder.

***What does the TOPS program in Lexington look like?*** We average around 48 athletes each season ranging in age from 4-40 with a wide range of disabilities spread across several teams.

***When does TOPS practice and play?*** We hold both fall and spring seasons. The fall season begins in August or early September and ends in late October. Practice is held on Sundays between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. and lasts one hour. We also participate in a TOPS tournament in Mason, Ohio in the fall. Spring sessions begin in March and end in May and are held indoors.

***Where does TOPS practice and play?*** In the fall, TOPS uses field #3 (nearest the concession stand) at Masterson Station Park. In the spring we use KISS, an indoor facility at 404 Sporting Court Lexington.

***What type of volunteers do we need?*** Volunteer positions include Coaches, Buddies, and Committee Members that focus on publicity, fundraising, planning, etc.

***How do we help support our volunteers?*** We track volunteer hours and provide a record for your school; we will write letters of support for college admission or scholarships. We have helped several of our volunteers to obtain scholarships and awards, participate in mentor programs, or do special class projects based on their experiences with TOPS.

***What is the Volunteer Role of a TOPSoccer Coaches?*** A **Head Coach** must commit up to two hours a week during the season. A Head Coach should be at least 18 years of age. Head Coaches are responsible for communicating with players and parents, organizing activities for practices, coaching during games and practices, monitoring the working relationship between buddies and players, communicating with the league director and volunteer coordinator. An **Assistant Coach** should be at least 16 years of age and must also be able to commit up to two hours a week during the season to assist the head coach with practices, games, communications with TOPS families

and volunteers in addition to the league director and volunteer coordinator. Coaches may be asked to participate in outside activities such as events at local soccer games, preview nights to recruit players and inform parents and volunteer training. **All coaches must complete the LYSA Background check form prior to the beginning of the season.**

**What does a TOPS buddy do?** A TOPSoccer Buddy is an invaluable volunteer. A buddy is not a player and does not score goals. Buddies participate directly with individual athletes or within a team with several athletes to enable



participation in a soccer activity. They help the TOPSoccer athlete succeed and keep them as safe as possible. TOPSoccer Buddies can be a caregiver, aide, family members, same-aged peer, a teenager or an adult. They can be a soccer player, someone who works with special needs children or someone who has no soccer experience, but a strong desire to enable children to have fun. Some examples of the role of the buddy are: Enables player to participate/play; assists/creates/directs/guides/teaches in a FUN but learning environment; continuously monitor/assess the player; role varies widely depending upon needs of the player and Interact with players, coaches, parents

**To help address the needs of the athletes, the following strategies may be used:**

- Create safe playing situations
- Provide assistance as needed
- Provide instruction directly during play
- Help to define the space and “strategies”
- Provide stability in an often chaotic environment
- Use touch/sign language/pictures to direct and guide
- Show activity and environment
- Direct the ball to the player for touches and contact
- Guide and direct, often not touching player directly, but being nearby
- Create opportunities for play
- Assist player to get into position to play
- Model desired skill
- Assist player to focus on the activity
- Ensure player understands instructions

**What we expect of TOPSoccer Volunteers**

- Fulfill your commitment. If you agree to volunteer, make every effort to come. Many of the athletes get very attached to their buddies. Get to know the parents of the athletes you are assigned to. Ask them questions. Ask them for comments or concerns. Each player is different and has different needs.
- ***If you cannot come*** make sure your coach and volunteer coordinator know you cannot come. Don’t wait until the last minute to let us know.
- Never leave an athlete unattended.
- Praise the athlete for their efforts.
- Report anything you observe, either in the physical environment or in the individual’s behavior that may cause harm to them, another athlete or volunteer. Report any injury immediately.
- Look for constructive ways to overcome obstacles.
- Do not engage in inappropriate contact or relationships with the athlete and report any inappropriate touching or actions by the athlete.
- Set a good example in appearance, conduct, language and sportsmanship.

**Numbers of Interest**

Volunteer Coordinator:	Janice Birdwhistell	<a href="mailto:jeb147@aol.com">jeb147@aol.com</a>	859-229-7670
League Director:	Jessie Birdwhistell	<a href="mailto:jessie.bird@uky.edu">jessie.bird@uky.edu</a>	859-608-4160
Registration:			859-223-5632

**How to learn if practice is cancelled?** [Rainedout.com](http://Rainedout.com) allows you to receive email and text alerts to game status changes, like rainouts. To participate in this program, you can opt-in to receive an email or a text by following these instructions: **Go to [Rainedout.com](http://Rainedout.com)** and enter LYSKY in the search box, and then click on LYSKY. Follow the directions in the blue “Sign Up!” box. Be sure to check your junk mail folder in case your validation code does not appear in your inbox. That’s all there is to it! Or check the TOPS Web page two hours before practice should start.