
RVAccess



soccer through love & support

RVAccess Manual

Director: Carter Blair

Technical Director: Leon Brownlee

Manual Produced By: Ben Hazelton, RVAccess Buddy

2016-2017 Season Manual



WHAT IS RVACCESS?

History

RVAccess is a soccer program for athletes with special needs run by the Richmond Kickers. RVAccess was formed in 2013 based upon the original TOPSoccer program located in Midlothian, Virginia. Since 2013, RVAccess has expanded with the number of athletes, volunteers, buddies, and coaches increasing with each season. An additional location at the Collegiate School fields was introduced in 2014 to access athletes on both sides of the James River. Through the support of private donors and financial grants, RVAccess is a cost-free program.

Objective

The primary objectives of RVAccess are to facilitate the sport of soccer for athletes with special needs, to encourage the formation of relationships between teenage volunteers (buddies) and athletes with special needs, and to create a positive environment for an hour of fun. Our goal is to provide a safe environment in which an athlete may engage in soccer related activities while playing with peers. With the transition from TOPSoccer to RVAccess, the program focuses upon each athletes' individual needs in a fun, flexible approach.

WHO IS INVOLVED IN RVACCESS?

Athletes

The RVAccess program strives to provide opportunities to foster relationships between young adults and all athletes with special needs. Any athlete, who due to physical, behavioral, or cognitive reasons cannot participate in other recreational soccer programs, may participate in the RVAccess program. Children and young adults of all ages, primarily from 4-19, may participate in RVAccess. In the RVAccess program, each athlete is either paired with a volunteer "buddy" for the duration of a session or participates in small-sided group activities and scrimmages.

Role of Buddies

An RVAccess buddy is any middle, high school, or college volunteer who is willing to have fun and desires to help an RVAccess athlete be successful and happy in the program. While many buddies do play soccer, no skill in soccer is required. The only criteria for buddies is the ability to smile and have fun!

Buddies are expected to devote their hour entirely to the athlete who they are playing with. Furthermore, buddies should be able to fully appreciate their athlete as an individual and a true friend, not as a person with a disability. During the session, buddies must constantly monitor the athlete for fatigue, dehydration, or medical issues. It is essential that buddies consistently attend RVAccess



RVACCESS

sessions throughout the season in order to develop and foster the buddy-athlete relationship. Having a consistent buddy each session helps athletes feel comfortable on the field and can help foster player development and growth both for the athletes and buddy.

Parents

Parents of the athletes are required to attend RVAccess sessions. If parents wish, they may accompany their child and their buddy. However, parents are highly encouraged to take a break, converse with other parents, and watch their children from the sideline. Siblings are also welcomed to play soccer. Prior to a session, parents should talk to their child's buddy about specific requirements for their child and answer any questions from the buddies. Furthermore, parents can follow RVAccess on Facebook to receive instant messages about inclement weather and other updates about the program. Prior to each season a schedule is posted with 8 dates and potential make up dates.

Coaches

With the help of paid and volunteer adult coaches, RVAccess sessions are able to be safe and fun experiences for athletes, buddies, and parents. Coaches help check in athletes prior to sessions, lead scrimmages, aid buddies, and help promote a safe environment. The RVAccess staff and their responsibilities includes:

- Director: Carter Blair
 - Advertise RVAccess in schools and other programs
 - Attend seminars and forums to reach out to the community
 - Continue education in recreation therapy
 - Schedule each session and reserve field at each location
 - Communicate with teachers, care givers, and parents about their athletes
 - Communicate session information each week as well as any changes
 - Lead on-field training session for buddies at the beginning of each season
 - Check in all athletes and assign buddies
 - Know the needs of athletes and communicate information with the assigned buddies
 - Provide adult support and supervision to all athletes and buddies
 - Help out wherever is needed during the session
- Technical Director: Leon Brownlee
 - Communicate and organize coaching staff
 - Lead on field training session for buddies at the beginning of each season
 - Know the needs of athletes and communicate information with the assigned buddies



Director Carter Blair



Technical Director Leon Brownlee

- Organize buddies at the beginning of each session
- Organize equipment and set-up field before each session
- Lead group activity for any athletes who want to participate (i.e. red light, green light)
- Provide adult support and supervision to all athletes and buddies
- Organize clean up of each session
- Briefly talk to athletes and buddies before dismissing group
- Check in Volunteers: Cheryl Farmer, Elizabeth Hazelton
 - Work with Director to greet and check in all athletes
 - Know the needs of athletes and communicate information with the assigned buddies
 - Help with pairing up athletes and buddies
 - Help with handing out jerseys at the beginning of the year and collecting medical forms
 - Provide adult support and supervision to all athletes and buddies
- Coaches: Don Hughes, Brett Chonko
 - Lead activities and games for higher functioning athletes
 - Know the needs of athletes to be able to best serve them
 - Provide adult support and supervision to all athletes and buddies
 - Provide a positive role model for athletes and buddies
- Volunteer Coaches: Robert Hazelton
 - Know the needs of athletes to be able in order to serve them best
 - Provide adult support and supervision to all athletes and buddies
 - Provide a positive role model for athletes and buddies
 - Photographer—posts photos to RVAccess Facebook page



Coach Brett Chonko



Coach Don Hughes

OVERVIEW OF A SESSION

Arrival of Buddies and Coaches

Buddies and coaches are expected to arrive 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the session (typically 3:30 pm). Sessions will be held either at the Collegiate School or Hensley Park. During this time, the director, technical director, and coaches will introduce themselves to new buddies, deliver instructions based on the day (such as weather or other circumstances), and instruct buddies on how to set up the field. In a typical session, a section of the field is portioned off for small-sided drills and scrimmages. Cones, goals, soccer balls (of all sizes and weights), poles, dribbling obstacles, parachutes, and more are spread-out on the rest of the field. Furthermore, prior to a session there is time for the coaches to discuss the overall goals for the day and address any questions, especially from any new buddies.

Arrival of Parents and Athletes

When a family arrives, a coach will assign the athlete to a buddy. In the case of a new athlete, a coach will assign a buddy based upon needs and experience. For a returning athlete, the buddy with whom they usually play with will be assigned. RVAcess wishes to create relationships that benefit both the athlete and the buddy. When meeting the athlete and parents at check-in, buddies should ask open-ended questions to the parents about any concerns regarding the athlete. Athletes with greater soccer abilities or who have a greater experience with physical activities may participate in a designated scrimmaging and skills session led by a few buddies and a coach.

During the Session

Now the fun begins! After being paired up, athletes and buddies may explore a range of soccer related activities or non-soccer related activities. Buddies may encourage playing soccer, but are suggested to let the athlete make the decisions regarding what is fun. Listening to the athlete is essential. During this time, coaches will be assisting buddies. In the case of a problem or medical emergency, buddies should notify a coach and parent immediately.

Final Discussion and Wrap-Up

At the end of the session, the technical director will call together all parents, athletes, buddies, and coaches for a brief discussion about the events of the day. Any special achievements (such as new skills learned or hat-tricks scored), news, or information (such as the location of the next session) will be shared at this time.

After the athletes are dismissed, the technical director will have a further discussion with just the buddies about any positives, negatives, and pressing questions resulting from that session. Buddies will then clean-up the field, put the equipment in the RVAcess trailer, and have any volunteer sheets signed.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

Buddy and Athlete Relationships

One of the primary objectives of the RVAcess program is to foster relationships between athletes with special needs and buddies. The joy the buddies and athletes display on the pitch is the greatest result of RVAcess! Ultimately, playing with your friend every week is tons of fun for both the buddy and the athlete!

Communicating Effectively

When interacting with peers, communication is essential for building relationships. While participating in a RVAcess session, communication is similarly important to have a fun afternoon and to forge relationships. Buddies should not patronize or speak down to athletes. Rather, everyone should treat every RVAcess member as you would want to be treated. Buddies should use age appropriate language and, if in doubt, ask a coach for assistance.



People-First Language

When discussing athletes with special needs, use People-First Language. People-First Language emphasizes athletes before their disabilities. By placing the athlete first, the disability is no longer the defining characteristic of an individual. People-First Language eliminates generalizations by focusing on the person rather than the disability. For example, say “people with disabilities” rather than “the handicapped” or “the disabled.” Rather than saying “she’s autistic,” say “she has autism” or “she has been diagnosed with autism.”

ADMINISTRATION

Registration

All RVAAccess sessions are completely FREE to athletes. However, registration for both athletes and buddies is required. To register as an RVAAccess athlete, parents can visit <http://www.richmondkickers.com/RVAccess/> or contact RVAAccess Director Carter Blair at cblair@richmondkickers.com. To become a buddy, you can join the RVAAccess Facebook page to receive further information about sessions and can email Carter Blair. At the first session, both athletes and buddies will receive a free t-shirt.



FUNDRAISING AND GROWTH

Methods

Through the support of private donors, RVAAccess was founded in 2013 and was able to become a cost free program for all athletes. Since its founding, RVAAccess has attended multiple events to showcase the program, including the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond and the Autism Society of Central Virginia annual convention. Furthermore, the RVAAccess program has applied for grants from businesses and philanthropic programs, including the Youth Philanthropy Project through the Greater Richmond Community Foundation and Capital One.

Expansion

Since the start of the program, RVAAccess has expanded due to buddy and athlete recruitment efforts. Through the Autism Society of Central Virginia, the Down Syndrome Association of Greater Richmond, and the parents of the wonderful athletes, the number of registered athletes has significantly grown. As of the fall of 2016, the RVAAccess program includes over 200 registered athletes. Young adults of all ages and soccer skill levels are welcomed to volunteer at RVAAccess sessions. Buddies are encouraged to recruit their friends through their schools and soccer clubs.

2016 FALL SCHEDULE

| DATE | LOCATION | TIME |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| September 3, 2016 | Labor Day Weekend - No Session | |
| September 10, 2016 | Collegiate | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| September 17, 2016 | Collegiate | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| September 24, 2016 | Collegiate | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| October 1, 2016 | Collegiate | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| October 8, 2016 | Columbus Day Weekend - No Session | |
| October 15, 2016 | Hensley | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| October 22, 2016 | Hensley | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| October 29, 2016 | Hensley | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| November 5, 2016 | Hensley | 4:00-5:00 PM |
| November 12, 2016 | Potential Make-Up Day | |



Spring 2016 Group Photo at City Stadium