The AVCA History Commission was formed as a subgroup to the AVCA Diversity Development Team on December 1, 2020. The History Commission’s purpose is to recognize, amplify, and celebrate the rich and diverse history of the sport of volleyball. The first phase of the Commission’s work will explore the contributions of Black Americans to the sport of volleyball. Phase 1 is timed to coincide with the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

PHASE 1 | VOL. 1.06

RAYMOND “RAY” GOODEN
Raymond “Ray” Gooden

Growing up in northern Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois, Raymond “Ray” Gooden became a highly decorated volleyball athlete out of Evanston High School, where he was named a three-time High School/AAU Junior Olympics All-American and the 1989 Illinois High School Player of the Year.

From Evanston, Gooden would head east to Columbus, Ohio and The Ohio State University to become a Buckeye. At OSU, Ray would earn two varsity volleyball letters and be named an All-Big Ten Conference club performer three times.

Graduating with a degree in Economics from The Ohio State University in 1994, Gooden would embark on a volleyball coaching career by taking over as men’s volleyball head coach and assistant women’s volleyball coach at Thomas More College (now Thomas More University) in Crestview Hills, Kentucky. In 1996, Ray would head back to Evanston as an assistant coach at Northwestern University. Subsequent coaching stops would include serving as an assistant with Lewis University volleyball in 1997 and five years as an assistant coach at Loyola University of Chicago from 1997-2001.

In 2002, then Northern Illinois University Director of Athletics Cary Groth and sport administrator Dee Abrahamson would make a groundbreaking and bold choice to bring Ray Gooden to DeKalb, Illinois and hire him to take the helm as head coach of the women’s volleyball program.

19 seasons and counting as the leader of Huskies women’s volleyball, the program has won 324 matches making Ray Gooden the program’s all-time wins leader. In Gooden’s tenure, the program has a 60% winning percentage in Mid-America Conference (MAC) matches including an amazing 43-5 run from 2014-2016. Five-time MAC Coach of the Year, Coach Gooden has recruited and mentored four MAC Players of the Year including two-time winner Lauren Wicinski. With five AVCA All-Americans, 32 All-MAC selections, 10 MAC All-Freshman selections, and 29 Academic All-MAC selections, Gooden has embodied NIU Athletics’ mission of “Developing Champions in the Classroom, Competition, and Life.”

Ray’s love for volleyball and leadership in the sport goes far beyond DeKalb, having served as a court coach for USA Volleyball’s National Team tryouts and National College Team tryouts as well as coaching internationally on multiple occasions. He also is an active member of the American Volleyball Coaches Association (AVCA) serving on the NCAA D-I Head Coaches Committee and the AVCA Diversity Development Team (DDT). In addition to his love for volleyball, Ray is an unabashed ‘lover of beats’ as the official or unofficial… depending on who you ask…resident DJ for the sport of volleyball. 😊

Follow the Huskies head women’s volleyball coach and lover of beats on Twitter @Raygooden_niu!

Thanks to Northern Illinois University Athletics and Mr. Mike Haase for contributing to this article.
AVCA DDT HISTORY COMMISSION

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COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
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