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.

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FOLUKE AKINRADEWO GUNDERSON
Born in London, Ontario, Canada, Foluke started playing volleyball in 2002 as a high school student. Growing up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, she attended St. Thomas Aquinas High School where she would be a three-time all-state selection, two-time All-American, and the Florida Gatorade Volleyball Player of the Year. A multi-sport athlete, Akinradewo was a four-time Florida State Champion in track and a two-time all-state selection in basketball. Off the court, she excelled in the classroom, where she was a Principal Honors Award winner all four years of high school.

Graduating in 2005, Foluke would move across the country to attend Stanford University where she continued to excel athletically and academically. A four-time AVCA All-American and the 2007 AVCA National Player of the Year, she would lead the Cardinal women’s volleyball program to three-straight national championship matches in 2006, 2007, and 2008. Foluke would wrap up her career as the all-time leader in hitting percentage at .446, where she remains, and top-10 all-time in total blocks, kills, and kills per set. She would graduate from Stanford in 2008 with a degree in Human Biology.

Having made her international debut in 2005 at the Pan American Cup just after graduating from high school, Foluke would compete in numerous events as a part of the various USA women’s volleyball junior teams. While at Stanford, Foluke would start on the 2007 Pan Am Games team that competed in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil. Helping that team win the bronze medal. In 2008, she spent time training with the U.S. National Training Team in Colorado Springs becoming an alternate for the 2008 women’s volleyball Olympic team. In 2010, Akinradewo would win bronze at the Pan American Cup, gold at the FIVB Grand Prix, and finish fourth at the FIVB World Championship. At the Grand Prix, she would be named MVP and Best Blocker setting the stage for three-straight FIVB World Grand Prix gold medals for the United States (2010-12).

After serving as an alternate in 2008, Foluke would make her Olympic debut at the 2012 Games in London. Wrapping up the Games as the second-best blocker with 0.89 per set and converting 61.2% of her attacks into points for a .495 hitting efficiency, she would help the U.S. women’s team win a silver medal. Adding another silver medal to ones the team won in 1984 and 2008.

In 2014 and 2015, Akinradewo added to her accomplishments with U.S. team with a gold medal at the 2014 FIVB World Championships in Milan, Italy and another gold at the 2015 FIVB World Grand Prix on U.S. soil in Omaha, Nebraska.

Running it back in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, Foluke would help lead the team to bronze medal finish, starting in all eight matches. Named to the 2016 Olympic Games Dream Team at middle blocker, she would register 104 points and rank third in blocking with 0.56 blocks per set.

In addition to representing the U.S. on the international stage, Foluke served as a graduate assistant at Stanford in 2009 and has played professionally in Japan, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Switzerland with her most recent stop being Hisamitsu Springs Club team in Japan 2020-21. In May of 2021, Gunderson was named to the 18-player roster for the FIVB Volleyball Nations League where the U.S. women’s team will look to win their third straight title (2018, 2019) with the tournament being cancelled due to COVID-19 in 2020.

Thanks to Stanford University and Team USA for contributing to this article.
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