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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RODERICK GREEN
A West Monroe, Louisiana native, Roderick Dal-Juan Green is the ninth of 14 children in his family. “Rod”, as he is often called, was born with genetic fibula hemimelia. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), this condition’s prevalence is estimated at 1 in 50,000. It is a congenital longitudinal limb deficiency characterized by complete or partial absence of the fibula bone. At the age of two, Rod’s right leg was amputated below the knee.

Rod is quick to shout out his family and the city of West Monroe for nurturing him and giving him his first shot at athletics.

“As long as I can remember, everyone knew Roderick as having one foot but treated me the same. I thought of myself as no different.”

This support sparked an inner confidence and that is the reason Rod was not one to let physical limitations enter his thinking. While a student at West Monroe High School, Green played football and basketball while wearing a prosthetic leg. In 1997, Green was named one of the top ten basketball players in northeast Louisiana and received a basketball scholarship to attend Oklahoma Christian University in Edmond, Oklahoma. Green would go on to play three years on scholarship and earn his degree in physical education and nutrition in 2002.

An unexpected encounter during a winter break pickup basketball game in West Monroe in 1998 would lead to a life altering transition ultimately landing Green in the 2000 Paralympics in Sydney, Australia. A young kid approached Rod and asked, “had he ever thought about running track?” Rod quickly replied that he had not because he didn’t like running. After a brief back and forth, Rod told the kid that if he made the basketball team, then he would run track. In a totally unexpected turn of events, Green heard from the kid a few weeks later that he had made the team. With no chance of breaking the promise, two months later Rod was running track. Heading into the 2000 Olympics he was not only one of the favorite in the 400-meters but would also compete in the 200-meters and the long jump. Rod’s response, “I honestly believe things happen for a reason…God does things for a reason.” Training under coach Juan Plaza, Green would make his second Paralympic Games appearance in Athens, Greece where he would compete in multiple events bringing home a silver medal in the 200-meters, a bronze in the 400-meters, and a bronze in the long jump competition.

While training at the University of Central Oklahoma in 2005-06, Rod became acquainted with U.S. Men’s Sitting Volleyball team member, Eric Duda. UCO, located in Edmond, Oklahoma, same town as Oklahoma Christian, happens to serve as the official year-round training site for the U.S. men’s and women’s sitting volleyball teams. This provided a perfect venue for another encounter. Eric would needle Rod about his athleticism by saying that if he was so athletic then he should be able to play sitting volleyball. If he agreed, then Eric said he would teach him. With hard work and hours of practice, fast forward to 2007, Rod becomes a member of the U.S. Men’s Sitting Volleyball team. Since joining the team, Rod has competed in numerous international events including the ParaVolley World Championships and being a four-time medal winner in the Parapan American Games. In 2016, Green would compete in the Rio Paralympics making his first appearance as a sitting volleyball athlete. The team would finish in 8th place, but Rod’s performance with the team led to him being named USA Volleyball’s 2016 Male Sitting Player of the Year.

In addition to his athletic accomplishments, Rod is well known for his leadership and work off the court where he mentors youth in the Oklahoma City area. Providing them with counseling, resources, and tools to make better lifestyle choices. In addition to this excellent work, Green continues to coach and serve as a private fitness instructor. In 2015, Rod and a former rec basketball teammate Scott Odom co-founded non-profit ABL-Amputee Basketball Invigorated—that host charity basketball events to benefit those struggling financially with medical costs and to empower them to develop and strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ. (Learn more about ABL.)

If Roderick Green could tell you anything, it would be this, “Never break a promise and always make the most of an encounter with others.”
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