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.
Tonya Denise "Teee" Williams-(Slacanin) was born in Los Angeles, California and as a youth was not very interested in the sport of volleyball. Tonya would admit that she was a “much better basketball player and track runner” than volleyball player. Growing up in metro L.A., she was a huge fan of the NBA Lakers and “Magic” Johnson, so she wanted to play basketball more than any other sport. While in junior high school, some her friends decided to try out for the school’s volleyball team, and they suggested that she try out along with them. Surprisingly, she made the team, but that first day of practice was extremely frustrating. She couldn’t do anything right. Thinking basketball came so much easier. She thought maybe she should stick with the sport that came more naturally to her. Tonya talked to her friends that had made the team and she decided to give it one more week. A week passed and she decided to stay on the team...and you know the saying, “the rest is history”.

Tonya’s abilities in basketball and track & field translated well to volleyball and allowed her to improve rather quickly. As basketball began to get too physical with bigger and stronger girls, it became an easy decision for Tonya to stick with volleyball. She would go on to tryout for the Ichiban Volleyball Club team and to her surprise she made the club team as well. In 1983 and 1984, the club would win the U.S. Junior Olympics Volleyball Championship. Tonya would compete as a multi-sport athlete at St. Joseph’s High School in Lakewood, California earning a letter in basketball, a letter in softball, and four letters in volleyball playing for Coach Roger Goodwin. In 1986, she would be selected as the Lakewood Athlete of the Year and was listed among the 1986 Volleyball Monthly Fab 50.

Tonya would move on to the collegiate ranks and join the University of Hawaii women’s volleyball program under the leadership of legendary 2010 AVCA Hall of Fame inductee Coach Dave Shoji. She wasted no time in establishing herself as one of, if not the top player in collegiate women’s volleyball. In 1987, she would lead the Rainbow Wahines to a national championship and would follow that up with a runner-up finish in 1988. Adding to the 1987 national championship season, Teee was named the AVCA Division I Player of the Year and Volleyball Magazine Player of the Year. She would add even more hardware by being named the AVCA’s Co-Division I Player of the Year in 1989 sharing it with eventual USA national team teammate Tara Cross. From 1987-1989, the Hawaii women’s volleyball team’s three season win-loss record was an amazing 99-8. Tonya would be named first-team All-American and first-team All-Big West Conference three times. Ranking in top five in kills, attempts, digs per game and block solos, while ranking in the top 10 in hitting percentage in the UH career record book, she would go on to be selected to the NCAA 1980s All-Decade team and be inducted into the University of Hawaii Athletics Hall of Fame in 1998.

Having competed on the international stage in the World University Games in 1987 and training with USA ‘B’ team in 1988, Tonya was poised to make her debut with the U.S. Women’s Volleyball National Team in 1990. Starting in 1990 at the Goodwill Games in Seattle, Tonya would compete with the team in numerous international events including the FIVB World Championship, the FIVB World Cup, the Pan American Games, and 1995 FIVB World Grand Prix, where the U.S. team would win a gold medal. Teee would make her Olympic debut at the 1992 Barcelona Games. In six matches as a starter, she would total 62 kills including a 22-kill outing versus Japan. The team would ultimately claim the bronze medal by sweeping Brazil in the third-place match on August 8, 1992. In 1996, Tonya would make her second Olympic Games appearance back on U.S. soil in Atlanta. The team would finish in a disappointing seventh place, but 'looking back she had to be glad that she did not quit when volleyball was frustrating, because there was no way she could foresee how many good things she would experience because of volleyball'.

Tonya would enjoy a stellar professional career in Europe on the hard court and in the sand in addition to competing with Team USA. She would play for some of the top professional clubs in Italy and Germany. After retiring from professional volleyball, Tonya would settle in Germany where she continues to reside. She retired from playing, but did not retire from volleyball as she currently serves as a coach and trainer helping youth athletes decide if volleyball is as right for them as it was for her...
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