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. 1.24

HALEY ECKERMAN
As a young black athlete growing up in Waterloo, Iowa, Haley rarely had African-American role models or teammates. Many of her Black classmates chose other sports – mainly basketball and track & field. She was always the one black player on her teams, but it did not take away her growing love for volleyball. Haley would have a decorated high school career that made her one of the top recruits in the nation coming out of Waterloo East High School.

Signing with University of Texas women’s volleyball, Haley wasted no time affirming her love for volleyball. In 2011, she was named the Big 12 and AVCA Freshman of the Year, as well as second team AVCA All-America. The team was awarded with the #1 overall seed in the 2011 NCAA tournament, but succumbed to the UCLA Bruins in the Lexington, Kentucky Regional finals denying the young freshman a trip back home to Texas, San Antonio to be exact, for the 2011 D-I women’s volleyball national semifinals. Being denied the chance to play for a national championship in their home state was a major disappointment despite the big picture of a successful season. But it is Texas volleyball…

The disappointing loss in the regional finals in Lexington made it easier with the start of the 2012 campaign for Haley and her teammates to be laser-focused on making it back to the Bluegrass State and Louisville, Kentucky, the site for the 2012 NCAA D-I Women’s Volleyball Championship. Haley and the ‘Horns would suffer three early season September losses to some stiff competition in the form of Big Ten powerhouses Penn State, Minnesota, and Illinois. The tough early season schedule obviously paid dividends as Eckerman and the ‘Horns closed out the season winning 23 of 24 matches including a sweep of the Oregon Ducks in the national championship match at the KFC Yum! Center in Louisville. The win earned a national championship for Coach Jerritt Elliott and was the program’s third overall national championship; first since 1988.

Haley would represent Texas on the All-Tournament team along with three of her teammates – tournament most outstanding player, Bailey Webster, Hannah Allison, and Sha’Dare McNeal.

From 2012-14, Haley would be named the Big 12 Player of the Year and AVCA First Team All-American three times. She would also be named Volleyball Magazine’s Player of the Year in 2012 and 2013. The Longhorns women’s volleyball program would make it three consecutive trips to the ‘final four’ with trips to the national semifinals in 2013 and 2014.

Following a dominant career at UT that saw the program win an amazing 87% (111-16) of their matches, Eckerman earned a bachelor’s degree in applied learning and development and went on to compete at the professional level for the next four seasons. Her professional career covered stops in South Korea, Puerto Rico, Azerbaijan, Italy and Russia. Since retiring from professional volleyball, Haley has embarked on a successful coaching career serving as head coach and leading Waterloo West High School to their first regional final in over 20 years in 2018. She made the move to college coaching in 2019 serving as an assistant coach and recruiting coordinator at Lamar University. At Tarleton State University, Haley helped the volleyball program transition in their first season as a NCAA D-I program in 2020. On May 27, 2021, Texas Christian University head coach Jill Kramer announced that Eckerman would join her staff as an assistant coach entering the 2021 season.

In addition to coaching, Haley has dedicated herself to empowering others and helping advance the sport of volleyball. In 2018, Haley co-founded ‘Team Dream’ – the first all-African American team to compete and win the USA Open National championship. In 2020, she co-founded Think Outside the Box, a volleyball coaching and athlete development company that provides resources and support, while addressing issues related to diversity within volleyball amongst players and coaches at all levels.

A young Black girl from Iowa had lived out her volleyball dreams that took her from Waterloo, Iowa to Austin, Texas and around the globe. Just like Haley that same opportunity exists for other young girls. Was this sport for Haley? The answer is a resounding, “YES!”

Haley Eckerman
University of Texas
Outside Hitter
2011-2014
Four-Time AVCA All-American
AVCA DDT HISTORY COMMISSION

DEITRE COLLINS-PARKER, CHAIR
ASSOCIATE HEAD COACH
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
2008 AVCA HALL OF FAMER

RAY GOODEN
HEAD WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL COACH
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

MAGGIE COUTURE
HEAD WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL COACH
JACKSONVILLE UNIVERSITY

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AVCA 40th ANNIVERSARY
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