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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JORDAN THOMPSON
Jordan Thompson
University of Cincinnati
Opposite
2015-2019
2019 AVCA First-Team All-American

Given her inherent athleticism and the twist of irony in having the name “Jordan”, it is not a huge surprise that she ‘gravitated to basketball at an early age’. But there was this problem... “It was really physical.” Jordan can laugh about it now, but she will admit at the time she ‘wasn’t the toughest kid’, so the contact part of basketball wasn’t something she liked very much. While attending Lake Harriett Middle School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, one of her friends convinced her to try out for the volleyball team. Despite knowing little to nothing about the sport of volleyball, she had discovered her calling athletically. “Her friend actually made the “A” team, and she made the “B” team, so they didn’t even get to play together. But she had so much fun playing that it didn’t matter. Her friend did the volleyball world a favor as Jordan’s casual interest eventually turned into a true passion for the sport. She began to play club volleyball and made the varsity squad at Southwest High School in Minneapolis before transferring in the last half of her sophomore year to Edina High School, where she became a volleyball phenomenon. Transfer rules allowed her to practice but required her to sit out a year at Edina. As a member of the Northern Lights Volleyball Club 17-1a team as a rising senior she really worked on developing her all-around skills on the volleyball court. A two-time AAU All-American, Jordan would lead the team to the 2014 AAU 17 Open title. With her size and athleticism, she was already attracting the eyes of college coaches and going into her senior she was poised to lead the Hornets to a successful season.

Ranked #44 on PrepVolleyball’s Senior Aces list in 2015, Jordan would lead the team in blocks and kills in her senior season. Looking to make an ‘immediate impact’ on the collegiate level, Jordan took a recruiting visit to the University of Cincinnati. Tucked in Big Ten Conference country, the hotbed for women’s collegiate volleyball, the Bearcats program would be easy to overlook. UC head coach Molly Alvey was a little unsure about Jordan’s decision after the visit. Knowing that it was a good fit for her but not wanting to ‘put all her cards out on the table’ initially, she eventually took her talents to the Queen City. And Thompson wasted no time establishing herself as one of the top women’s volleyball players in the country. Named the 2015 American Athletic Conference (AAC) Freshman of the Year and a unanimous first-team all-AAC selection, Jordan would lead the Bearcats to a 20-win season in her freshman campaign. Appearing in 117 sets, Jordan would post a team-high 3.92 kills/set and end the year second on the UC all-time freshman kills list with 459. Year two, the star continued to rise as she was the first unanimous choice for AAC Player of the Year. Add to that first-team all-AAC for the second time along with AVCA All-Region and AVCA Honorable Mention All-American. Jordan became the fastest in UC and AAC history to reach 1,000 career kills and the only player to reach the milestone as a sophomore. Another 20-win season for the Cats and a trip to the NCAA tournament losing in the 1st round to No. 16 seed Florida State. Redshirting in the 2017 season due to shoulder surgery, Jordan was primed to close out her career at UC as well, if not, the greatest volleyball student-athlete in program history. 2018 saw Jordan garner her first AVCA All-American nod as a third-teamer and you guessed it, unanimous AAC Player of the Year for the second time. Jordan led the nation in kills, points, kills/set, and points/set totaling 827 kills for the season. A superstar on the court for sure, but also a superstar in the classroom. Jordan was honored by CoSIDA as Academic All-District Second Team. All this while helping the team claw their way to a 26-8 finish and a 1st round win in the 2018 NCAA tournament against Illinois State. “I’M NOT DONE YET!” The redshirt senior would move to transcendental status in Bearcats athletics lore being named a 2019 AVCA first-team All-American and unanimous AAC Player of the Year for the third time (REALLY? Yes. Really!). Thompson would again lead the nation in kills, points, kills/set and points/set, become UC’s all-time leader in kills on September 27, 2019 against the ECU Pirates, and on November 3, 2019 (Senior Day) against UCONN would become the sixth player in NCAA history to record 50 kills in a match (STOP IT!). Jordan career would culminate with another trip to the NCAA tournament for the Bearcats as they moved one step further making it to the ‘Sweet Sixteen’ after a five-set win over #6 overall seed Pittsburgh in the second round. The team would finish the season at 27-7.

A veteran of the USA women’s volleyball training pipeline, Jordan was named to the U.S. National Team with collegiate eligibility still remaining in the Summer of 2019. Leading the team in points, USA would win the gold medal for the second year in a row. While also playing professionally in Turkey, Jordan would represent the U.S. in the 2021 FIVB Volleyball Nations League helping the team bring home the gold medal again after the tournament was cancelled in 2021. On June 7, 2021, Thompson’s name would be one of 12 named to the roster for the Tokyo Summer Olympic games. In pool play, Jordan would lead all players with 20 points in a sweep over China. In the next match against Russia, she would suffer an ankle injury that kept her from playing, but not being a part of U.S. Women’s Volleyball National Team’s first ever Olympic gold medal. Jordan put it like this, “I know that even though I wasn’t playing, I was a part of the team. I was still contributing in some way. I was just thankful to still have that opportunity to be with them.” That’s Jordan MacKenzie Thompson!

Immediate Impact...Check! Lasting Impact...Check!

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