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 | FEATURE 2
“A FAMILY AFFAIR”

THE ODEN SISTERS
KIMBERLY, ELAINA, & BEVERLY
THE ODEN SISTERS

This journey is a once in a generation story. Not just a volleyball story, but a story of excellence, perseverance, and commitment. In sports annals, there have been a several notable siblings that have reached the heights of their given sport – The Williams Sisters in tennis, The Manning Brothers in football, and the Gasols of basketball. In volleyball, it is the Oden Sisters...

Kimberly.

Elaina.

Beverly.

PERIOD.
Kimberly "Kim" Oden was born in Birmingham, Alabama to Abraham and Gwendolyn Oden. Abraham was a veteran of the Vietnam War and a 22-year member of the U.S. Marine Corps who rose to the rank of Master Sergeant. Abe or "A.B." had been involved with military sports teams and was a youth sports coach when the Odens moved to Irvine, California shortly after his retirement from the military. Kim, like her younger sisters would be blessed with height and large hands, reluctantly took up volleyball at the urging of her father and joined the Orange County Volleyball Club at age 13. She had a rough start, but soon came to enjoy volleyball. Kim attended Irvine High School and became one of the top prep volleyball players in the nation during her time there.

From Irvine, Kim moved on to Stanford University and a decorated and successful collegiate career that led to four straight trips to the National Championship semifinals with two-straight runner up finishes in 1984 and 1985. Individually, Kim was a three-time All-American, was named the National Player of the Year by Volleyball Monthly in 1984 and 1985 and the AVCA National Player of the Year in 1985. She capped it all off by winning the 1985 Broderick Award as the nation's top collegiate volleyball player.

Graduating from Stanford with a degree in public policy in 1986, Kim went on to play with the U.S. National Team from 1986-1992 and in 1994. She served as the team captain for the 1988 Seoul Olympic team and the 1992 bronze-medal winning Barcelona Games team. Kim moved into the coaching ranks at the collegiate and interscholastic levels. In six seasons (2002-08) as head girl's varsity coach at St. Francis High School (CA), where she also served as guidance counselor, Oden led the team to state championships in Div. I in 2002 and Div. II in 2003 winning over 100 matches in her tenure with the program.

Earning a Masters Degree in Counseling Psychology from Santa Clara University in 2007, Kim currently serves as Associate Director of College Counseling at a California prep school and is the Board Chair of Starlings Volleyball USA. She likes to read the Bible and books about black history in her free time.
Elaina Oden was born in Orange, California. She attended Irvine High School. In addition to volleyball, Elaina was a standout in basketball, soccer, softball, and track & field. She was named the school's Athlete of the Year as a senior. Graduating in 1985 as a top recruit, Elaina signed with the University of the Pacific and would become one of the most decorated athletes in UoP history. Coached by John Dunning, the program won back-to-back national championships in 1985 and 1986 with a combined 75-6 record including a win over Kim's Stanford team in the 1985 Finals. A major knee injury kept her out of the 1987 collegiate season and the 1988 Summer Olympics where she had hoped to team with Kim. Despite this major setback, Elaina persevered and would end her career in Stockton as a three-time All-American (1985, 1986, and 1989), Volleyball Monthly's Player of the Year in 1986, and a Broderick Award nominee in 1985 and 1986.

After being a member of the U.S. Junior National Team in 1985 and competing in the 1986 Goodwill Games and the 1986 World Championships, Elaina would reach the pinnacle of volleyball as a member of the U.S. National Team in the 1992 Barcelona Games and the 1996 Atlanta Games.

A 1990 graduate of the University of the Pacific, Elaina is employed with the State of California as an auditor. She also serves as a part of the USA Volleyball Foundation Board.
Beverly "Bev" Oden was born in Millington, Tennessee. Bev, like her older sisters attended Irvine High School. Irvine brought home CIF State Championships in 1986 and 1987 and Bev was named Volleyball Monthly’s 1988 Player of the Year. From Irvine, she headed to Stanford to play for Coach Don Shaw. Wasting no time, Bev was named the 1989 Pac-10 Freshman of the Year. She would go on to be named the 1990 AVCA Player of the Year, Pac-10 Player of the Year, winner of the Honda Award, and become the first player to earn AVCA first-team All-America honors four times. In 1991, she brought home the Honda-Broderick Award as the nation’s best female collegiate volleyball player. After three seasons and three consecutive runner-up finishes, Bev capped off her Stanford career by guiding the Cardinal to the 1992 NCAA Championship at The Pit in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

On the international stage she competed in the 1991 and 1995 Pan Am Games, the 1994 Goodwill Games silver medal winning team, the 1994 World Championship, and the 1995 World Cup. She played middle blocker for the U.S women’s volleyball team in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia.

In May 2007, Bev was involved in a tragic incident when she was held in custody unjustifiably by Orange County sheriff deputies in Irvine in relation to a reported incident. After being questioned and spending over an hour in the back of police car, it was found that Oden had no connection with the incident in question. The incident led local community leaders to form the Oden Commission to hold discussions on racial profiling between residents and law enforcement.

Beverly Oden is currently working as the Volleyball Guide for the popular website About.com. She is the author of numerous articles on volleyball and releases a weekly e-mail newsletter.

“Volleyball coaches would ask 'When are you going to start playing?' and I would say, 'I was not starting! I wanted to take my own footsteps.' I played softball and soccer -- for a while. My sisters were always playing in tournaments and coming home with trophies. In softball, when we won, we got one trophy for the whole year. They had seven or eight, one from each tournament they had won. I said, ‘Wow! I want to try that!’”
AVCA DDT HISTORY COMMISSION

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HEAD WOMEN’S VOLLEYBALL COACH
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

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