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 3
“BEACH POWER!”

DAIN BLANTON
ANNETT BUCKNER DAVIS
JENNY JOHNSON JORDAN
“People assume that if you’re an indoor player then it’ll actually translate to the beach, and that’s just not the case. On the beach, there’s only two of you on one side and you have to be pretty skilled at every skill. So you have to pass. You have to set. You have to hit. Sometimes you get to specialize a little bit more with a blocker and offender. But other than that, you have to be able to execute every skill well.”

-Jenny Johnson Jordan
DAIN BLANTON

Dain Blanton was born November 28, 1971 in Laguna Beach, California. Attending Laguna Beach High School, Dain was named the 1990 Orange County Player of the Year, MVP of the Pacific Coast League, and earned All-American honors at the Junior Olympics. In addition to his stellar play as a volleyball athlete, Blanton was an All-State basketball player for Laguna Beach leading them to the California Interscholastic Federation state basketball final game in 1990.

Dain accepted a volleyball scholarship to attend Pepperdine University after high school. While at Pepperdine, he would earn honorable mention All-America and claim the 1992 Men’s National Volleyball Championship at Worthen Arena on the campus of Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. The Waves swept the Stanford Cardinal and finished the season 24-4 coached by the legendary Marv Dunphy.

After graduating from Pepperdine with a teaching credential in Physical Education and degree in Public Relations, Dain would embark on a career as a professional beach volleyball player becoming the first African-American to win a major title when he won the Hermosa Beach Grand Slam in 1997. On September 26, 2000, Blanton and his partner Eric Fonoimoana would secure the men’s beach volleyball gold medal at the Sydney Olympic Games taking down one of the world’s best beach pairs in Brazilians Ze Marco de Melo and Ricardo Santos. Blanton immediately cemented his legacy as one of the best men’s beach volleyball players in history. Blanton would return to the Olympics with new partner Jeff Nygaard in 2004 in Athens, becoming the first two-time U.S. male beach volleyball Olympian.

Dain would turn his focus to sports broadcasting in 2007. He would cover not only volleyball and beach volleyball; he covered high school and college football and basketball and even the NBA and Major League Baseball while working for ABC, NBC, ESPN, Fox Sports Net, and the Universal Sports Network.

Dain is currently the head beach volleyball coach at USC. From 2015-2018, Dain served as a volunteer assistant for the USC beach program under Coach Anna Collier. The program would win the 2015 AVCA national beach championship and the 2016 & 2017 NCAA championships during his time as a volunteer. Dain’s first season as head coach was halted due to concerns with COVID-19, but he is raring to go in 2021 with matches against his alma mater Pepperdine scheduled to open the season.
Annett “Nettie” Buckner (Davis) was born September 22, 1973 in Long Beach, California. Annett attended St. Anthony High School in Long Beach. Inducted into the inaugural 2013 St. Anthony High School Hall of Fame, Buckner was named the California Interscholastic Federation player of the year in 1988 and 1989. As a junior, she led the Saints to the 1988 CIF State Volleyball Championship. Buckner wasted no time upon her arrival at UCLA, leading the Bruins to a 31-5 record and the 1991 NCAA national championship. Annett would be named the 1991 Pac-10 Conference Freshman of the Year. Buckner and the Bruins were not done. She would go on to lead the program to NCAA runner-up finishes in 1992 and 1994, be named AVCA first team All-American in ’93 and ’94 and cap a four-year run with a win-loss record of 126-12.

After brief run with the U.S. national indoor team, Buckner teamed up with former UCLA teammate Jenny Johnson (Jordan) to form a lethal beach volleyball pair that would become the winningest USA men’s or women’s team on the pro beach tour in 1999 with earnings of $202,500. In 2000, Annett and Jenny would represent the USA in beach volleyball at the Sydney Olympic Games where they would finish in fifth place. In 2002, the duo would join forces and end the AVP Tour season ranked second after being unranked to start the tour season. In 2004, Buckner Davis and Johnson Jordan would snap the 89-match winning streak of legendary pair Kerri Walsh Jennings and Misty May-Treanor and take second place at the Manhattan Beach Open and would go on to be named alternates for the Athens Olympic Games. Annett married former UCLA and U.S. National team swimmer Byron Davis in 1997 and is currently the head indoor (since 2020) and head beach (since 2019) volleyball coach at NAIA The Master’s University in Santa Clarita, California. The couple have two daughters and Byron serves as the head men’s and women’s swimming and diving coach at The Master’s. Annett enjoys cooking, sewing, jewelry making, scrapbooking, and is active in church ministries.
Jennifer A. “Jenny” Johnson (Jordan) was born June 8, 1973 to Elizabeth (Thorsen) and 1960 Olympic Games decathlon gold medalist Rafer Johnson. Jenny has a younger brother Joshua, who like his father was a UCLA track and field athlete.

Jenny attended the Windward School in Los Angeles. She had not played volleyball until arriving at Windward, but the volleyball coach, Gail Edison Holmes changed that and would become a lifelong influence on her as a competitive athlete and as a coach. In addition to volleyball, Jenny participated in track & field, basketball, and softball while at Windward. Graduating in 1991, she would join the women’s indoor volleyball program at UCLA. A two-time team captain, Jenny helped lead the Bruins indoor program to the 1991 NCAA national championship, and NCAA runner-up finishes in 1992 and 1994. She was also a two-time All-Pac-10 Conference first team All-Academic selection in 1993 and 1995 and is one of 12 volleyball Bruins to post at least 1,000 career kills and digs.

After leaving UCLA, Jenny would transition to the beach, playing in the Pro 4’s, FIVB, WPVA, BVA, and AVP Tours. On May 10, 1997, Jenny and her former UCLA teammate Annett Buckner made it to the finals of the Cybergenics Open in Orlando, Florida becoming the first African-American beach volleyball pair to make it to the finals of a professional tour event. Jenny would go on to finish ranked in the Top 10 in points every year she competed on the BVA and AVP Tours. In 2000, she would again team with former UCLA teammate, Annett Buckner to compete in beach volleyball at the Sydney Olympic Games where the duo finished in fifth place. In 2002, she was honored with the AVP Special Achievement Award.

In 2012, beach volleyball pro Jenny would become Coach Jenny when she became the first beach volleyball coach at her alma mater, the Windward School in addition to coaching in the LAVA girls club beach volleyball program. Now in her eighth season with the UCLA beach volleyball program, Jenny was promoted to associate head coach in July, 2020. The UCLA Hall of Famer along with head coach Stein Metzger have led Bruins beach to back-to-back national championships in 2018 and 2019 with a combined win-loss record of 75-7. Coach Johnson Jordan capped off the back-to-back titles by being the named the 2019 AVCA National Assistant Beach Coach of the Year on May 9, 2019. Jenny is married to former UCLA wide receiver Kevin Jordan and they have two children – Jaylen, a Long Beach State University volleyball student-athlete and son, Kory. Jenny is active in campus ministry leading Bible studies and one-on-one mentoring sessions with student-athletes at UCLA.