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 5
TEAM DREAM
2018 USA VOLLEYBALL NATIONAL OPEN DIVISION CHAMPIONS
“WE REALLY DID USE THIS AS A PLATFORM,”
(LITERALLY.)

TEAM DREAM
2018 USA Volleyball Open Division National Champion
“IT WAS HARD KNOWING IF THIS IS THE SPORT FOR ME,”

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. In 2011, she was named the Big XII and AVCA Freshman of the Year, as well as AVCA All-America Second Team. She followed up in each of her next three seasons by being named the Big XII Player of the Year (2012-14) and AVCA First Team All-American (2012-14) three times.

Following her dominating career at UT, 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.

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!”

What about the other young Black girls that ask that same question?
Haley and fellow Iowaan Kazmiere Brown grew up a few miles from each other and saw an opportunity to play for the same team in the USA Volleyball Open Division tournament. That led to a question: What if they could find enough African American women to make up an entire team? TEAM DREAM was born with the idea to inspire young girls to dream as big as each of these young women did!

Katherine “Khat” Bell  
College: University of Texas  
Hometown: Mesquite, Texas

Kazmiere “Kaz” Brown  
College: University of Kentucky  
Hometown: Waterloo, Iowa

Chloe Collins  
College: University of Texas  
Hometown: Cypress, Texas

Carnae Dillard  
College: University of North Texas  
Hometown: San Antonio, Texas

Haley Eckerman  
College: University of Texas  
Hometown: Waterloo, Iowa

Erin Fairs  
College: University of Louisville (& USF)  
Hometown: Richmond, Texas
The squad came together quickly with limited practice time, but this pioneering team of Black young women would rise up and dominate the tournament in Dallas by going 7-0. Beating the Hoosier Exterminator team in five sets to capture the title.

Chanelle Gardner  
College: University of Louisiana-Lafayette  
Hometown: Parks, Louisiana

Monique Harris  
College: Iowa State University  
Hometown: Clinton, Iowa

Jenelle Jordan  
College: Cal-Berkeley  
Hometown: Houston, Texas

Sha’Dare McNeal  
College: University of Texas  
Hometown: San Diego, California

Haleigh Washington  
College: Penn State University  
Hometown: Colorado Springs, Colorado

Allegra Wells  
College: University of Mississippi  
Hometown: Garland, Texas

Watch TEAM DREAM make history in the fifth set at the 89th USA Volleyball Open Division Championship Match (17:36)
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

SARAH GRAVES

AVCA DDT HISTORY COMMISSION ADVISORS:
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NICKIE SANLIN, AVCA DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT TEAM CHAIR
KENNEDY D. WELLS, AVCA STAFF LIAISON

AVCA DIVERSITY AWARDS
Live It, Love It, Coach It!