

2025

AVCA Thirty Under 30 College



Justin Sanders
USC-Upstate
Assistant Volleyball Coach

Career Accomplishments to Date:

- 2017 SEC Regular Season Champions
- 2019 OVC Regular Season Champions
- 2021 SOCON Tournament Runner-Up
- Coached a total of 22 all-conference players (JSU, Wofford, and Upstate).

Coaching Roles:

- USC-Upstate: Assistant Volleyball Coach, 1/2023 to present.
- Wofford College: Assistant Volleyball Coach, 2/2020-12/2022.
- Jacksonville State University: Indoor & Beach Assistant Coach, 7/2018-1/2020.
- University of Kentucky: Student Manager, 7/2015-12/2017.

What made you decide to get into coaching volleyball?

My sister and I grew up just outside of Lexington, KY. She played growing up, but boys volleyball hadn't taken off. Chris Beerman was the first coach to help me understand the game of volleyball and made me realize this is the sport I want to be around my entire life.



What are your career goals in the sport?

Becoming a Head Coach and competing for championships is a big motivator. Wouldn't mind getting into the professional game as it continues to grow. As I get close to a retirement age, I'd love to give back to the sport in some way (officiating, conference tournament director, etc.). Just keep giving back to the best sport on Earth.



Which coaches have influenced you the most?

- Isaac Wong & Paula Rubenstein were my college coaches. They showed me a new level of gratitude for this amazing sport.
- Craig Skinner, Anders Nelson, and Lindsey Walton opened the doors for me at the Division 1 level. Learning from them everyday as a student manager really opened my brain to a higher level of volleyball.
- Ali Skayhan and Lynze Roos have really molded me into the coach I want to be moving forward. I've been fortunate to work with these amazing women in this decade. Ali continues to empower me to be the best version of myself every day.

What do you enjoy most about your coaching job?

The relationships! Giving back to the student-athlete experience is always special. No two athletes are the same, and every athlete has a different story. Being able to guide others to be their best version of themselves is something I strive to do every day.

Volleyball has given me an incredible experience on this planet, and I hope to give back as long as I am willing and able!

