

# 2025

## AVCA Thirty Under 30 College



**Mariah Yarbrough**  
Philander Smith University  
Head Coach

### **Career Accomplishments to Date:**

First full time Head Coach in Philander Smith University history. In 2019, I lead the team to it's first winning season in ten years and held the record of most wins in a season with 17-15. In my first season back at Philander Smith, I lead the team back to a winning season from the previous year breaking the regular season record finishing 20-6 (0.769).

### **Coaching Roles:**

- Philander Smith College 2017-2020 - Head Coach
- Southwestern Christian University 2020-2023 - Head Coach
- Philander Smith University 2024-Current (The institution transitioned from a college to a university in 2023). Head Coach

### **What made you decide to get into coaching volleyball?**

Coaching was my opportunity to stay involved it with the sport. I have always been an athlete and my heart has not been able to let the game go. When I graduated from Philander Smith College back in 2017, my coach had just left and I was approached with the opportunity to step in and coach the team. That opportunity to me was God saying "You're not done with the game yet."

**What are your career goals in the sport?**

My first goal has always been to win a championship! I've helped turn this entire program around, and in my first season back we lost in semi finals, so I am still reaching towards that. However, I one day want to coach volleyball at an NCAA, Division I, HBCU. I love the HBCU culture and want to some day transition into the highest level.

**Which coaches have influenced you the most?**

My track coach Darryl Miller was my coach from the age 6 to 18, and he is truly responsible for my growth as an all around athlete. Coach Miller taught me how to work and believe in myself. However, my college volleyball career and coaching career is because of the influence of my JuCo coaches, Melissa Anderson and Rebecca Minor. They were the toughest coaches I have ever had, and they challenged me beyond belief. In just two years of playing under them my mindset, work ethic, and level of play changed for the better!

**What do you enjoy most about your coaching job?**

The best part about coaching is the fulfillment of impact you leave on an individual. Witnessing someone get better after your influence is unmatched. Whether it's skill or life wise, aiding in the growth of an athlete is gratifying. I tell each of my girls "It is my passion to build a structure within the sport of volleyball that will help you be successful on and off the court!"

