FAMU tennis standout joins The HistoryMakers

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Florida A&M University tennis player Rachel Harden is excited to be a student ambassador for The HistoryMakers Credit: FAMU Athletics

Tennis player Rachel Harden is excited to have another year of NCAA eligibility. She gets to continue competing, which she loves, and pursue a master’s degree in applied social sciences. Harden has also been named a 2021–’22 student brand ambassador for The HistoryMakers, a nonprofit research and educational organization committed to preserving, developing and providing access to thousands of African American video oral histories.

Student brand ambassadors work to increase awareness and use of The HistoryMakers Digital Archive on their campuses. She will inform her professors and peers about the over 3,300 videos that exist of prominent Black individuals in the sciences, politics, sports, media, law, education, entertainment and more.

This summer, the student brand ambassadors are participating in an immersion program learning how to use the archive. Harden and other student brand ambassadors will do in-depth research, create weekly blogs, learn networking skills and find ways to promote HistoryMakers.

“I’ve spent time looking at some of the videos. I just finished an assignment for them,” said Harden, who has not yet decided whether she will pursue a career in academia or law. “Some of those interviews are just amazing. It’s
more than a textbook can give you, for sure. … I’ve found some very interesting stories of people I’d never heard of before.”

Harden is eager to learn more about the Detroit Riots of 1967. “That’s something that always fascinated me, so I love hearing the first-hand accounts of major events,” she said. “It’s almost like you can imagine yourself there.”

The student brand ambassadors were chosen from a competitive pool of applicants. Playing competitive tennis helped hone Harden’s edge. Her father is a tennis coach, so she grew up in the sport. Interested in attending an HBCU, she chose FAMU because it had everything she was looking for and she appreciated that the women’s tennis team was truly representative of an HBCU. She said the experience has strengthened her ability to work well with a team.

“As student-athletes, we’re ambassadors for our universities and student leaders,” Harden said. “I’ve really enjoyed being able to compete and represent FAMU in that capacity.”

Last year, HistoryMakers launched its WomanMakers initiative to increase greater representation in the archive. “Black women, we’re the ones who make it happen,” said Harden. “We’re always on the forefront of movements. The civil rights movement wouldn’t have been successful without women.”