Founder Story – Carlos Donat Arjona

Built on Resilience. Driven by Integrity. Designed for Your Next Play.

I started playing tennis at four years old. At sixteen, I played my first two professional tournaments. I was on a path toward becoming a professional tennis player.

Tennis wasn't just a sport — it was a lifelong pursuit of excellence. But during my junior and senior years of high school, injuries reshaped my future. Five surgeries in two years forced me to confront something every high performer eventually learns:

Not everything is under your control.

I rebuilt. Physically. Mentally. Emotionally. I committed myself to getting back to peak form — not just to compete, but to prove to myself that I could return stronger.

By my senior year of college, after years of disciplined training and relentless preparation, I was in the best shape and playing the highest-level tennis of my life. Everything was aligned. The work had paid off.

And then I got hurt again.

For the second time — at the very moment I felt strongest — the season was taken away from me.

It wasn't just physical pain. It was the realization that even when you do everything right, outcomes aren't always guaranteed.

But that experience reinforced something powerful:

While I couldn't control injuries, I could control preparation.
I could control effort and I could control whether I had options.

Because I had poured myself into academics with the same intensity as tennis, I wasn't defined by one path. I wasn't cornered by circumstance.

That lesson became foundational to how I think about life and wealth.

Financial planning, at its core, is about creating options before you need them.

It’s about building strength during the season, so you’re protected during the unexpected. It’s about making sure that when life shifts — as it inevitably does — you aren’t limited by a lack of preparation.

Options create freedom. And freedom creates confidence.

Discipline Beyond the Court

Education was never a backup plan — it was a parallel commitment. My parents deeply valued learning, and I approached academics the same way I approached competition: with intensity and pride.

That mindset led me to the United States to compete for the Division I tennis team at the University of Portland, where we won the West Coast Conference Championship for the first time in program history.

I double majored in Finance and Operations & Technology Management and later earned a Master of Science in Finance.

Everything I do represents me and my last name. I don’t cut corners. I don’t chase shortcuts. Whether in sport, academics, or business, my standard has always been simple:

If I’m going to do something, I will do it to the best of my ability.

That competitive mindset translated naturally into finance. Just like tennis, every day is a new opportunity to perform, to improve, and to make an impact.

The Moment That Defined My Mission

When I turned eighteen, I received access to a small investment fund my grandparents had created for each grandchild at birth.

It was meant to be a head start. A symbol of belief. A quiet act of love and long-term thinking.

But when we reviewed the account, the remaining value was less than what had originally been invested.

There was no clear explanation. No transparency. Just confusion and disappointment.

In that moment, I felt like my grandparents had been betrayed by someone they trusted.

And I made a promise to myself:

This will never happen to my family again.

That wasn't just a lesson about markets.
It was a lesson about trust.

I realized early that not everyone in the financial industry operates with sincere intent. Many are driven by revenue targets, sales incentives, or shareholder pressure.

There is nothing wrong with building a profitable firm. I fully intend to grow and succeed. But I believe profit should be a byproduct of excellence — not the driving force behind advice.

When revenue and margins lead every conversation instead of client success, something is broken.

I decided I would build something different.

Why Next Play Was Created

Next Play Wealth was founded on a single, non-negotiable principle:
The client's success must always come first.

Not corporate agendas.
Not sales quotas.
Not hidden incentives.

Just the client.

I wanted to build a firm where I could look someone in the eye — whether they are an athlete, a business owner, a first-generation wealth builder, or a family planning retirement — and say with absolute conviction:
Every recommendation we make is designed for you.

No competing interests.
No corporate playbook.
No pressure to push products.

Just disciplined, strategic advice built around your goals and your future.

Modernizing Advice Through Technology

The financial industry, in many ways, is outdated. Access to knowledge is limited. Transparency is often lacking. Technology is underutilized.

Next Play was built to modernize that experience.

We leverage technology not for flash, but for clarity.
To improve transparency.
To enhance access to knowledge.
To make smarter, data-driven decisions.
To protect clients from being taken advantage of.

Because informed clients make stronger decisions. And strong decisions create better outcomes.

Fulfillment Through Client Success

What drives me isn't just portfolio performance or financial strategy.

It's watching someone walk into our office stressed about retirement — and two years later, they're traveling the world with confidence.

It's seeing parents send their children to college debt-free.

It's helping a family move into their dream home.

It's structuring an estate, so wealth passes efficiently to the next generation.

In many ways, I am fortunate enough to live life multiple times — through the successes of the people we serve.

That is fulfillment.

Everyone only gets one life.
If we can help protect it, expand it, and create more options within it — that is meaningful work.

I strongly believe in giving people peace. In creating options. In ensuring they are never taken advantage of in an industry where that risk is real.

The Standard

If my eighteen-year-old self — the one who saw that investment account decline — looked at this firm today, I would want him to feel proud.

Proud that we are helping families protect what they've built.
Confident that we are doing this with integrity.
Certain that trust is never taken lightly.

And excited about how many more lives we will positively impact in the future.

Next Play Wealth exists for one reason:
To ensure that when life changes — whether by choice or by circumstance — you have options.

And those options are protected by advice you can trust.