

Tales from the ARVInn—Lucas Doherty, Tennis Bum



Don't let the cute face fool you. Lucas Doherty (8/2034) had been an up-and-coming tennis pro at the age of twenty-eight, but he couldn't adjust to his new appearance as a four-foot-tall eight-year-old kid, physically. The change in his status, from celebrity to little boy, left him mad at the world. He'd worked hard at his game to get away from his criminal, n'er-do-well family. His manager, who'd previously been supportive, abandoned him completely with no warning, taking most of his money in the process. His parents and older brother took him in, then hid him away and made him work for his keep. They would hit him, take away meals and whatever else it took to keep him compliant. He fought back as best he could, but eventually just gave in and cooperated. He had retained many skills as a player, despite his size, and his knowledge of the game allowed him to play well. Hours of forced practice on a hidden court kept him sharp. His anger over his forced situation was poured into his game.

Threatened and beaten, he was forced to hang around public tennis courts in the Miami area and hustle unwary people for money—kids, adults, whoever. He'd have to stay until someone called the cops...or their mom. Then whoever was watching him would grab him and get away quickly.

Lucas Doherty (8/2034), in Miami, 2065¹

This continued for about a dozen years before he was caught. He went first to detention, then AR Protective Services became involved, and he was sent to in-patient counseling and finally to a group home for AR-Adults. His family didn't like the loss of income, so they tried to kidnap him a couple of times. When his parents were jailed, his brother kidnapped him again, this time beating him to the point of unconsciousness, screaming that he was finished with him.

Playing in Miami, 2065²



As Lucas regained consciousness, he realized two things: he was in the car and his brother was on the phone. “Yeah, Jack. I’m going to get rid of the little jerk permanently. Just be sure nobody disturbs the work site after I’m done or somebody will hear about a couple of other side jobs with your equipment. Talk to you in the morning.”

Hearing the conversation, Lucas did the first thing he could think of. He grabbed his brother’s neck from behind and tried to choke him. His brother, startled by the unexpected pressure on his neck, tried to pull him away. He let go of the wheel briefly and, at that moment, the speeding car struck a large chunk of exploded tire, directly in front of it.

They were in a construction zone, with concrete Jersey barriers on both sides. The car went sideways and began to roll. When the EMS got to the scene a half-hour later, it took them a few minutes to discover Lucas’ small frame on the back floorboard of the demolished vehicle. His brother was killed on impact. Lucas was so injured in the wreck that it was only a week later that an investigator managed to work out what else had happened.

After three months in the hospital, his name was changed, and he was put into an identity protection program by AR Protective Services. The trauma from his attack and the wreck left him with physical and psychological damage. He was placed into deep therapy for both. This eventually brought him to ARVInn in 2079. Here, he has continued therapy to deal with issues from his home life and his injuries. Today, he speaks quietly and effectively of the need for counseling for victims of domestic abuse. He has given a number of interviews, primarily in print, on the topic, but says he doesn’t think he’ll ever do so live on-camera.



Lucas at ARVInn, 2109³

He has said, "If it were not for the amount and depth of the counseling I have received over the past years, I seriously doubt I would have continued living. Between my loss of status as a pro player and the abuse I received from my family, even during my original childhood, and the pain and difficulties coming from the wreck, I would have been overwhelmed. Today, with counselors and friends at ARVInn and elsewhere supporting and encouraging me and with the opportunities I have now to introduce tennis to youngsters just starting to learn the game, I have new purpose and what amounts to a sense of calling in my life. I repay what I can by reminding society that counseling and therapy will save lives and improve the quality of life for many who have physical and psychological struggles in their lives."

After his parents' deaths, he was given the option to revert to his original name, but he said he would not, both to put the past behind him and for simple convenience.

He obviously still enjoys tennis, but his injuries also affected his reflexes. Years of continuing practice have diminished the effects of his injuries but cannot totally reverse them. These days, he gives private and small group lessons to children just starting and, more than occasionally, enjoys startling bigger and older players.

Despite his years of counseling, Lucas still doesn't go out in public much, partly because of PTSD. He also has a slight limp, from his injuries. In social situations, he easily develops an embarrassed stutter and speaks in a very shy, quiet voice. He has a small group of on-campus friends and a few others elsewhere that he visits occasionally.



Lucas and students, 2109⁴



Lucas in a match, 2108⁵

On the court, however, he turns into a ball of energy and is actually an excellent coach for the new students. Being very near their size (or even smaller), he comes across as unthreatening and encouraging, rather than demanding, even when trying to get them to put more effort into their work.

As an instructor, Lucas has consistently been praised by his students and their parents as being knowledgeable and patient with the children. More than one mama of a stressed kid has said she could just hug the coach for his approach with their child. Today, that appreciation supplies much peace to a wounded and troubled spirit. He continues to work with counselors in private and group sessions. Lucas himself probably sums it up when he says, "I'm just a tennis bum who gets to start new

players on their way. If I can make it a great fun thing for them to do, it's also great fun for me."

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³ Photo by RODNAE Productions from Pexels (edited)

⁴ Photo by RODNAE Productions from Pexels (edited)

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