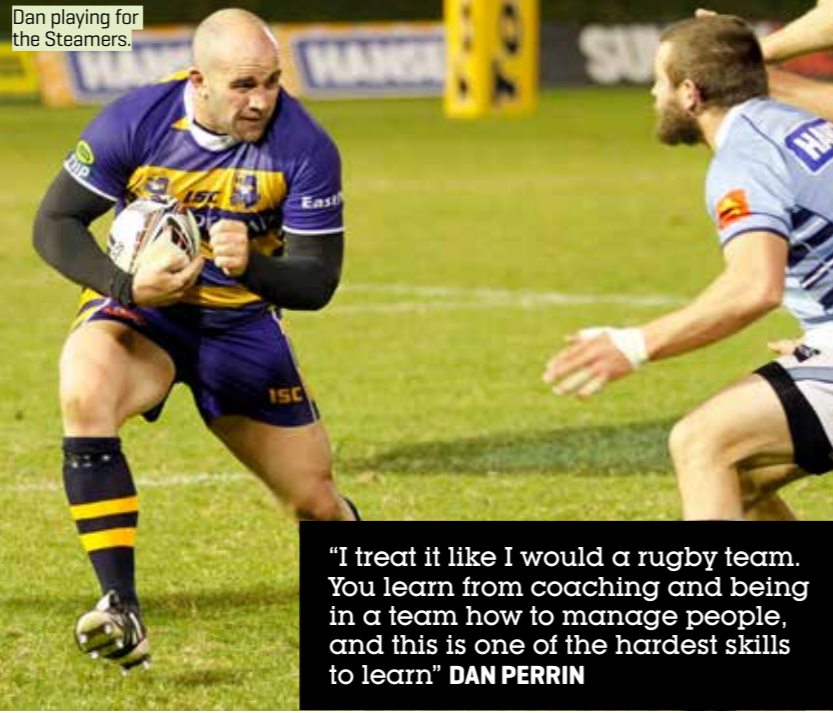


# PLAYERS IN BUSINESS

## Rugby promo and cold call a game changer for former Crusaders and Chiefs player



Dan playing for the Steamers.

**"I treat it like I would a rugby team. You learn from coaching and being in a team how to manage people, and this is one of the hardest skills to learn" DAN PERRIN**

### **A** THROWAWAY JOKE TO SIR PETER 'THE MAD BUTCHER' LEITCH AT A SUPER RUGBY PROMO ABOUT OPENING UP A MAD BUTCHER STORE AFTER HE FINISHED PLAYING RUGBY ENDED UP BECOMING A REALITY FOR FORMER CRUSADER AND CHIEFS PLAYER, DAN PERRIN.

Although made in jest, true to his word, many years later Dan and his wife Nikki opened their own Mad Butcher store in Nelson. Dan knows that he has used plenty of the skills he learned from rugby in the business where the couple employ 13 staff: "Having a good culture, a fun environment and being successful are all things I learned from rugby that I use in my own store. I like making sure the staff are rewarded. We have lots of fun in the store and do team bonding outside of the shop, but we all work damn hard."

"I treat it like I would a rugby team. You learn from coaching and being in a team how to manage people, and this is one of the hardest skills to learn. As we all know, people are a critical asset in a business like this and these are all things you learn in rugby, but probably don't appreciate at the time," Dan said.

The hooker, who only officially retired from club footy this year, has always been grateful that he had his butchery trade

to fall back on. He hadn't always planned it that way, but a "kick up the backside" from his parents that helped him knuckle down and get his qualification.

Dan had wanted to have a year off after school, but his mum and dad were not having a bar of it. His parents cut out an advert from the local paper looking for a butchery apprentice at Walsh's Meats in Christchurch. They gave it to him and told him to call the shop, which he did. He started work at Walsh's two weeks later. Although he was oblivious to it at the time, taking on this new role proved to be a game-changing decision for his future.

The butcher - who reckons that his favourite bit of meat is scotch fillet, cooked hard and fast in the pan with a bit of salt and pepper - admits that over the years he has had to make some calculated decisions that were not always easy. "I want to encourage other players to take up the opportunities offered through the Personal Development Programme. Be open to different options, but have goals and targets. It is important post-rugby," said Dan.

"I had eight years of hanging out with thirty players a week, but I found out it is important to have a stable support network post-rugby. Don't be afraid to tap into your network both inside

and outside of rugby. There are plenty of rugby supporters who are keen to help you, especially at promos. Make the most of rugby for networking and tapping into resources because you never know where they will lead and I am a living example of that."

Perrin grew up in Christchurch, playing rugby for New Brighton from the age of four. It was a club that the whole family was involved with. After attending intermediate school, which has since been demolished by the earthquakes, he attended Aranui High School with Ben Franks. The two front rowers were among the new intake of the Aranui High Rugby Academy, which Dan said he absolutely loved: "As a young fella having good people running the academy and being able to develop in that environment while studying at school was a dream come true."

Dan has been a hooker for his entire rugby career. He worked his way through the Canterbury age grades from U12s to U21s. After that, his first big decision-making process was ahead of him. When he made the Canterbury Academy, it had an abundance of hookers. Then an opportunity to move to Nelson came up, so had to decide what would be best for his career. He went to Nelson Bays, who

were in the second division at the time. Despite this, there was word on the street that the Tasman Rugby Union was about to be formed. This was a deciding factor for him. Just prior to moving he had completed his butchery qualification at Walsh's Meats, so he knew he had a career if the move didn't work out.

Dan moved to Nelson on his own, not knowing anyone, but he had done his research on who was ahead of him in the rugby system. He credits this research as being critical. The fact that Tasman were about to join the NPC was also a door-opener for his professional career.

In Nelson, he started doing casual work at the freezing works, but ended up as a production manager at a sawmill due to the mill bosses being more rugby-friendly employers. Dan made the Nelson Bays team, finishing the season as their starting hooker. The following year Tasman formed and he was named in the squad.

He played 36 games for Tasman and spent two years in the wider training squad for the Crusaders, making his Super Rugby debut against the Hurricanes in Christchurch. Then the Chiefs and Bay of Plenty showed some interest in him, so once again a calculated decision was made to move north for more opportunities. The move paid off and he made his debut for the Chiefs against the Brumbies after being named in the Chiefs wider training group.

When Corey Flynn broke his arm, Dan got called back to the Crusaders, but the following year the Chiefs gave him a full contract. He didn't get a lot of game time due to Aled de Malmanche and Hika Elliot being ahead of him. He spent two years at the Chiefs while playing for Bay of Plenty.

In his third year with BOP, Dan needed shoulder surgery. With his house and partner being back in the South Island, it was time for another decision - where to from



Dan and the Mad Butcher (Peter Leitch) pose outside the store on opening day.

**"It was the second-biggest store opening in Mad Butcher history at that time. I got...a phone call at 3am from the Mad Butcher himself giving me a little pep talk and saying that he would see me in a few hours." DAN PERRIN**

here? He was pushing close to 30 years old, so decided to retire from professional footy, move back to Nelson and focus on getting married to Nikki and starting a family.

He kept his hand in club footy as a player/coach and was still playing club rugby for Wanderers before finally hanging up the boots at the end of the 2017 season. He is now coaching the Tasman B team.

Upon his return to Nelson, Dan purchased a courier van and started his own business: "It was a lot of work with a lot of competition and I didn't feel it was going to help me achieve the goals I wanted. Through the club I was coaching/playing for an opportunity arose at Taylor's contracting in a manager's role so I jumped at the chance."

"It put me in pretty good stead for the coaching side, but it was easy to transfer the skills from my rugby days into other environments."

"My wife and I sat down and had a goal-setting session. I had met the Mad Butcher a few times through the Chiefs and in jest I had joked that I would open a store after rugby. My wife and I talked through the idea and contacted the Mad Butcher Company to ask about opening a shop in Nelson. We had never cold called like that before, but it was the best phone call I have made. If we never had asked, it never would have happened."

"We were fortunate to have been careful and saved our money on the way through, but still needed to get some backing from the bank. We flew to Auckland, had a three-hour meeting with Michael Moreton from the Mad Butcher, and nine months after the meeting with him we were opening our own store in November 2014."

"It was the second-biggest store opening in Mad Butcher history at that time. I got up at 2am on opening day and got a phone call at 3am from the Mad Butcher himself giving me a little pep talk and saying that he would see me in a few hours."

Dan enjoyed the knowledge and expertise of a franchise environment with head office providing support and systems. He found it extremely helpful for planning, stock levels, gross profit and working out what margins they should be working towards.

There were plenty of stressful times, from the opening and being so busy, to plateauing out, to establishing a regular market share and working out stock levels.

Dan went the first six months without a day off, and as he and Nikki also had a new baby it was full-on in the Perrin household. "I thought rugby was hard, but this was next level!" said the father of two.

While setting up the store, he was given a tip about franchises that he found useful: "Swim with the tide and you will succeed, swim against the tide and you will drown." Clearly the couple have swum with the tide as - three years on - Dan and Nikki now have a highly successful business, and he is very happy with how things are tracking.

Dan admits he is pretty busy, but wouldn't have it any other way. He is running a business, has a family and is also a resource coach for the Canterbury Academy. He says he finds coaching provides a good balance outside of work. As if all that isn't enough, he also does rugby commentary on Radio Sport and is pushing Sumo to let him have a crack on SKY: "Call me, Sumo. The phone is always on!" laughs the Nelson Mad Butcher.

**MAD BUTCHER NELSON**  
201 Songer Street, Stoke, Nelson  
Open: Mon-Sun 7am-7pm  
Facebook: [Madbutchernelson](#)  
Website: [Madbutcher.kiwi](#)  
Email: [madbuchernelson@xtra.co.nz](mailto:madbuchernelson@xtra.co.nz)