



With the ITM Cup campaigns just finished this edition of the NZRPA Players Own has been edited by the Southland Stags. What rugby team will be the next?

PLAYERS IN BUSINESS

YOUR NAME IN RUGBY WILL ONLY HELP YOU SO FAR WHEN YOU FINISH PLAYING, AFTER THAT IT IS DOWN TO HARD WORK AND GOOD TIME MANAGEMENT SAYS FORMER SUPER RUGBY PLAYER AND SOUTHLAND ICON JASON RUTLEDGE.



JASON RUTLEDGE

38 year-old former hooker Jason Rutledge started his plumbing apprenticeship by default but it is something he will be eternally grateful for. Jason had experienced a concussion in the High School top 4 competition. In 1996 his Mum sat him down and they decided it would be a good idea to take three years off rugby. Jason decided that he needed a trade and after a stint building dairy sheds he thought plumbing might be a bit more interesting than making concrete pits. He did his apprenticeship at Riverton Plumbing and in those days you had to go to Wellington to attend the block courses. After he finished his apprenticeship he went back to rugby playing club in 1999, got selected for the Southland Stags in 2000 and then made his Super Rugby debut for the Highlanders in

2004 and had a recall in 2009. He started his own plumbing business after the Super Rugby season in 2004 appropriately called Rutledge Plumbing. He was clear that his focus was going to be providing top service. Jason said "Service is key in business. People appreciate good service, good manners and being a tidy tradesman. It is simple things like returning people's phone calls, sticking to time frames and being honest. Time management was crucial while he was playing for the Stags and running his business.

"I was always racing to training and to jobs. It was madness, but I was always looking to the future."

Jason had a bad run with injuries. He had concussions, snapped his Achilles, broke his leg, pulled his right hand pectoral muscle and pulled his bicep off. He stills plays the game with a view to playing till he is a 40 year old. He has four staff under him but is firmly committed to staying on the tools. The father of three with one due shortly knew he always needed to have a plan for life outside of rugby with Super Rugby the icing on the cake. "During Super Rugby we had plenty of personal development and it is only in retrospect that you truly appreciate the value of it, so I encourage the younger player to really listen up and not take it for granted. You may think you are going to be there forever but you won't be!" He built his business up over five years and then had to put his business on

hold while he played Super Rugby and then went back to it.

"I was lucky that I had a loyal client base and people who understood that when it came to Super Rugby I had to be full time with my footy. When I came back to the area after Super Rugby my clients came back."

A few years ago he joined forces with his two younger brothers, Callum a builder and Andrew an electrician to form the Rutledge Trade Group. It was ironic that when Jason had appendicitis his younger brother Callum took his place in the front row of the Stags while he recovered from surgery.

The brothers find that offering all three services under one umbrella of the Rutledge Trade Group has been a smart move for both them and their clients. The family business is going well and clients appreciate the fact that they only deal with one company for everything states Jason. "They don't have to chase other tradespeople up, we do it for them!" said Jason.

Jason reflects on his representative rugby career fondly but has one bit of advice for young players

"Enjoy your time, it is a great lifestyle but remember you are playing a sport, so you have to enjoy it. Work hard and you will get results. You are in the best time of your life so make the most of it."

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