

MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
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CAPTION

0400

Rowland Smith shearing to a sixth New Zealand Open Championship on Saturday night, watched by judge Ian Buchanan, a former top Open shearer. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

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The spoils of winning the New Zealand open shearing title - a quad bike and all. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

A giant in shearing – Rowland Smith.

Hawke's Bay shearer Rowland Smith has completed one of the most remarkable individual seasons in New Zealand shearing sports by winning a sixth New Zealand championships Open title in Te Kuiti.

His win in the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre on Saturday night came just 24 hours after he claimed his 41st finals victory in a row in New Zealand by winning the North Island Shearer of the Year final, and while awaiting a scoring-system outcome of an earlier Saturday night New Zealand Shears Circuit final which would see the sequence come to an end.

Since winning the World title in Ireland in 2014, the now 31-year-old Smith has been beaten only 10 times in 84 finals in New Zealand, with 23 from 24 in the season that finished in Te Kuiti, and 136 in 12 seasons in the top class after graduating with already a successful record including the Golden Shears Junior and Senior titles, won when the two-metres-tall giant was growing up around Ruawai, in Northland.

With his fifth Golden Shears Open title and three other victories on the month-long route to Te Kuiti, Smith was rounding off preparations for a bid to next season's bid at regaining his New Zealand World Championships place for the July 2019 big event in France with a chance of repeating his 2017 feat of victories in all three Open-class shearing events at the New Zealand championships.

Starting with victory in the North Island final over 10 ewes and 10 lambs each on Friday, he stumbled only on the merinos of the three-types circuit final won by Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford before finding his element in the Open final of 20 second-shear sheep each.

Top qualifier of 38 in the heats, seventh in the quarterfinals and top qualifier again in the semi-finals, Smith shore on stand No 2 alongside Taranaki-based Scots farmer and 2012 World and 2015 Golden Shears champion Gavin Mutch, who on No 1 made the pace from the start.

Mutch breezed through the first 10 in 7min 49sec but to perhaps the biggest roar of the night was overtaken in the last stages by home-town hope Mark Grainger who finished in 15min 47.35sec.

Mutch was next off, followed by Pongaroa shearer David Buick in a brave performance after an injury during the week, with Smith and two-times winner and reigning World champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, next, locked together at 16min 2.67sec, just 15 seconds covering the first five.

Smith won claiming the better combined quality points, and Kirkpatrick had to settle for second place in all three of the finals, having been runner-up in the Shearer of the Year and Open finals last year, and the Circuit and Open finals in 2016, when he won the North Island final.

Mutch was third overall, Buick fourth, and Stratford fifth, with Grainger drifting to sixth, penalised heavily in the pen judging after having the best points in judging on the shearing board.

Smith won the biggest prize in shearing sports – a \$15,499 Can-Am Outlander 570 Pro Quad Bike, and \$3000, and with Stratford another UK trip to represent New Zealand a series of shearing test matches in July.

The process for finding the two machine shearers to wear the black single at the 2019 World championships is expected to be decided in August.

ENDS

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