

MEDIA RELEASE

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

EASTER SPIRIT: Pagan Karauria (centre) stunned by an announcement she'd won the first Royal Easter Show woolhandling title, much to the delight of beaten favourite Joel Henare (left) and runner-up Monica Potae (right). PHOTO/DOUG LAING SSNZ

Easter spirit: Beat the favourite and thank him for helping you win

Central Otago shearer and woolhandler Pagan Rimene has won an historic 175th Royal Easter Show woolhandling title in Auckland in the best of the Easter spirit – praising the World champion she beat for mentoring her to the win.

The 29-year-old daughter of a World champion woolhandler and a record-breaking shearer, and employed in the industry almost half her life, she said it was Motueka-based event favourite and eventual third-placegetter Joel Henare, from Gisborne, who got her into the shape needed to win the three-handler final of five full-wool fleeces each.

The runner-up was Monica Potae, of Milton in South Otago but having travelled from visiting family Coromandel settlement Kennedy Bay.

With just the New Zealand championships in Te Kuiti next Thursday-Saturday to end the season, Karauria said it's been her best summer as she bounces back from the disappointment early the previous season of just missing out on a place in the New Zealand team for the 2017 World championships, where Henare won both the individual title and the pairs title, with Maryanne Baty, also of Gisborne.

Highlighting the camaraderie amongst competitors in the shearing sports, Karauria said it was “awesome” to win what was thought to have been the first woolhandling event held at the show. “It's something pretty special,” she said.

“Joel’s been mentoring me on how to prepare better for finals, better ways to do things,” she said. “He’s been really good, pretty much stripping my performances apart, and telling me where I go wrong.”

The result was that while she’d had just one previous win this season, on much-contrasting lambswool at Winton in Southland in January, she’s reached more finals than ever before, and was runner-up to Henare on finewool at the New Zealand Merino championships which started the season in October, in the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final at Balclutha last month and on March 3 when Henare claimed his 6th consecutive Golden Shears Open title, and 100th Open-class win.

For Karauria it was the 15th win of an Open-class career which started off with a win in her first Open final at the Canterbury Show in 2006, and was a big confidence-booster ahead of the New Zealand championships which end the season and start in Te Kuiti on Wednesday.

She will be aiming to go one better than in her only previous New Zealand championships Open final – runner-up in 2016 to Joel Henare.

Karauria plans to stay in New Zealand until at least the end of next season’s World Championships New Zealand team selection process, unlike recent seasons in which she worked in Australia, and often crossed the Tasman in short stints home to contest the major titles.

Also a Senior-grade competition shearer, she said she keeps physically fit by shearing every day, which has also been credited for her recovery from a major back injury in a work-van crash in 2008. “I prepare mentally in my own time,” she said.

Today’s event attracted 15 entries, who Karauria said were “all out of our comfort zone” in front of a largely tourist audience and using wool tables made from wooden shipping pallets.

Auckland show board member and shearing and woolhadling commentator Phil O’Shaughnessy said beforehand there hadn’t been a lot of sheep to be found in Auckland – “nor wool tables.”

Karauria won \$900, Potae \$500 and Henare \$250, but the winner said: “No one really comes up for the money. It’s the title that counts.”

It was the third day of the show’s annual Northern Shears, shearing dominating the first two days in which Golden Shears winners Rowland Smith, of Hastings, and Tegwyn Bradley, of Woodville, claimed the Open

and Senior titles respectively. Daniel Seed, also of Woodville, and Reuben Alabaster, of Taihape, won the Intermediate and Junior shearing finals respectively.

Show vice-president Duncan McNab said the shearing and woolhandling, with thousands of showgoers passing by in the pavilion where the competition and displays were held, remained at “a high level.”

Mr O’Shaughnessy said adding the woolhandling was a success, but decisions remain to be made about its future on the programme

Result of the Royal Easter Show Woolhandling at Auckland on Sunday, April 1, 2018:

Open final (5 fleeces): Pagan Karauria (Alexandra) 107.418pts, 1; Monica Potae (Milton) 116.67pts, 2; Joel Henare (Gisborne) 131.656pts, 3; Sheree Alabaster (Taihape) 4; Amy Karaka (Te Karaka) 5; Trish Moke Ludlow (Waipawa) 6.

