

## MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand  
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### Captions

#### Southern Shears

An historic lineup for Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford (second from left) after winning the South Island Shearer of the Year title on Saturday for the first time, in the final for an 18th time.

#### Nathan Stratford

Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford shearing in a final in Gore in 2015. He's shorn 18 South Island Shearer of the Year finals, but won the title for the first time on Saturday.

#### Southern man finally takes South Island title off the North

It may have taken 20 years but it just about meant more than the World title he won last year for top South shearer Nathan Stratford as he became South Island Shearer of the Year for the first time on Saturday.

Stratford has shorn the final 18 times at the Southern Shears in Gore, the last 16 in a row, but almost always in the shadow winners from the North Island – four times the runner-up and five-times the third placegetter.

The closest he'd come previously was in 2006 when he was beaten by just 0.03pts, when it was won by Tuatapere shearer Alton Devery, the last time it had been won by a South Island shearer.

But Stratford had to settle for fifth in the other Open-class feature on Saturday, his Southern Shears Open final still without winning that title. It was won by Hawke's Bay shearer Rowland Smith for a third year in a row.

Smith had not completed the minimum of four South Island finals to be eligible for a defence of the Shearer of the Year title, but it would have been no surprise had the northern dominance of the final continued, Stratford being one of just two South Islanders among the six shearers on the board.

It was a surprise to the winner, who had finished fifth, more than a minute behind first-man-off Casey Bailey, of Riverton, who shored the 20 in 17min 22sec.

"I thought I was too far behind, but I had to wait around for the results," said Stratford, who then found he'd won with markedly the best quality points. It was enough to give him victory by almost half-a-point from Wairarapa shearer David Buick, who maintained the second place in which he had finished the race, also more than a minute before Stratford.

Seven-times South Island Shear of the Year winner and Napier gun John Kirkpatrick was third, but nudged Buick out of second place in the Open final in which Smith recorded his 32nd consecutive win in finals in New Zealand since the start of February last year.

It was also last February in hometown Invercargill that Stratford won the World teams title with Kirkpatrick, and finished third in the individual final won by his teammate.

Sir David Fagan, who also won the South Island Shearer of the Year title seven times, including twice in the last 20 years, was on hand again, but in the role of Shearing Sports New Zealand chairman presenting Southern Shears life membership to chairman Richard Pearce and Maitaha shearing contractor and show supporter Bill Elers.

A regular winner of other South Island events, and with more than 60 victories and Master Shearer status to his name, Stratford's biggest wins were in the New Zealand Shears Circuit final in Te Kuiti and the Corwen Shears in Wales in 2012 and the PGG Wrightson Wool National Circuit final at the Golden Shears in 2014.

But he is yet to win either Te Kuiti's New Zealand Championships Open final, after shearing nine of its finals, or the Golden Shears Open final, in which he has shorn seven times.

In another feature of the last of the Southern Shears' two days was the CP Wool Shearing Series win by Smith and Kirkpatrick over Welsh shearers Matthew Evans and Alun Lloyd Jones, putting New Zealand up 3-0 with on test to go at Apiti next Saturday.

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