

World champ Avery takes final shears showdown - April 14, 2009

World shearing champion Paul Avery finished the 2008-2009 season in winning style by taking the Northern Shears open title at the Royal Easter Show in Auckland.

It was the 41-year-old Taranaki farmer's 10th win in 25 finals during Shearing Sports New Zealand's season which comprised 63 competitions throughout the country, and he did it by beating Napier shearer Johnny Kirkpatrick, 38, who had won 17 finals since the two returned from the World Championships in Norway where they finished first and second in the individual final and won the teams event on October 5.

Kirkpatrick, who a week earlier won a second successive New Zealand open in Te Kuiti to gain some compensation for his shock failure to reach the Golden Shears final in Masterton last month, finished second in the weekend's final showdown. Of the 14 finals in which they met, Kirkpatrick won seven and Avery six, and the only time both were beaten in a final was in the PGG Wrightson National series final, won by Rakaia shearer Tony Coster at the Golden Shears.

Third at the weekend was Te Kuiti veteran and former Tuakau shearer Digger Balme, who a week earlier failed to make the top 24 for the New Zealand Open quarterfinals. Te Kuiti contractor Dean Ball, who won three finals during the season, was fourth, and fifth was David Fagan, the Te Kuiti icon who on March 7 won his 16th Golden Shears open, the second of his two wins during the season.

Kirkpatrick had already confirmed his place at the top of Shearing Sports New Zealand's open class rankings, featuring an all-conquering series of trips to the South Island where he won all seven competitions he entered, including the South Island Shear of the Year title. He had also headed the rankings last season, with 16 wins.

Kirkpatrick's nephew, 18-year-old Gisborne shearer Ian Kirkpatrick, restated his dominance of the senior competition season by adding the Northern Shears title to his Golden Shears and New Zealand Championships titles, and nine other wins which ranked him No 1 in his class.

Another Gisborne teenager, 17-year-old Joel Henare, retained his place as the top-ranked open class woolhandler, although he is yet to win either the Golden Shears or New Zealand open titles. There were no woolhandling events at the Easter Show.

The shout's on you, PM tells The King - April 05, 2009

It might not sound like the greatest piece of royal etiquette, but Prime Minister John Key seems almost certain to have his wish for a morning tea shout from the King after one of his team's victory in a competition for past national sheep shearing champions in Te Kuiti on Saturday night.

The spoils, with Mr Key in the audience in the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre at the 25th Anniversary New Zealand Shearing Championships went to the title's 1987 winner and now 59-year-old Kaikoura MP Colin King.

For his four-and-a-half minutes on stage, Mr King pocketed a cool \$200, a commemorative trophy, a purple winner's ribbon, and a Tui umbrella, but in keeping with the everyone's-a-winner spirit of the event, so did his other five opponents - the only other winners of the title, which had been dominated for 16 years by local hero David Fagan, now 47.

Three of the six later shore in the 25th anniversary open final, won by defending champion and Hawke's Bay shearer John Kirkpatrick, with Fagan second, and 1995, 2000 and 2007 champion and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery, fourth.

There was some allowance for age in the past-champions shear, with King and foundation winner and competition president John Fagan given a 35-second head start on the current open championship trio, and King Country-based former Southlander and 1990 winner Edsel Forde getting a 15-second break.

Ultimately Kirkpatrick, the baby of the field at the age of 38, powered past the field on the last of four sheep, which he completed in 3 minutes 13 seconds, although with the handicap time added it was officially posted at 4min 3.21secs.

Mr King, shearing on the sixth stand which he traditionally occupied as a left-hander in all of his big competitions, was last off, taking 4min 28.97secs, but made up for the deficit with his trademark clean shearing quality which had also won him a recent open plate final in the South Island, and won with a 1.2pts margin over Fagan, one of three second placings on the night for the current Golden Shears champion, while Kirkpatrick was a further 0.068pts back in third place.

Mr King's there was mutual back-patting in the speeches which followed, before Mr Key suggested the smoko comemoration at Caucus.

World champs shear limelight at home- April 05, 2009

Napier's John Kirkpatrick and Taihape's Sheree Alabaster scored their biggest wins since the Shear Blacks' World championships triumphs in Norway six months ago when they took the New Zealand open shearing and woolhandling titles respectively in Te Kuiti on Saturday night.

The 38-year-old Kirkpatrick was both the fastest and the cleanest shearer in what was an especially sweet 17th win for the season - four weeks after his shock elimination in the Golden Shears in Masterton, where the title was won for a 16th time by five-times World champion and Te Kuiti hero David Fagan.

Kirkpatrick retained the title he won for the first time last year, when he completed a run of six wins in six major competitions throughout the country in February and March.

On Saturday night, chasing New Zealand shearing's richest prize - a Can Am ATV, other products, travel and cash, with a combined value over 25,000 - he and Fagan waged an enthralling contest side-by-side contest on stands one and two.

Each was in front at various times until 47-year-old Fagan began to fade, just a little, and World champion and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery, 41, of Toko, working out of the limelight on stand five, swept into contention to take the lead on the 16th of the 20 sheep.

Ultimately Kirkpatrick was first off in 13 minutes 47.39 seconds, Avery finishing nine seconds later, and Fagan was third off in 14min 12sec.

Aiming for win No.107 in a 15-season open-class career which long ago disposed of a dream to become a policeman, Kirkpatrick still had to wait for the judges' verdict.

But with the best marks in the pen outside his win was confirmed by a surprisingly comfortable 1.7pts from Fagan who claimed second place.

Second Te Kuiti hope Dean Ball, 42, one of New Zealand's top shearers for years but yet to win the Golden Shears or New Zealand opens, produced the best board judging result and just out-pointed Avery to take third. Dion King, Napier's 2006 Golden Shears champion, was fifth and surprise finalist David Buick, of Pongaroa, was sixth.

Alabaster, a 34-year-old Taihape schoolteacher, was in a class of her own in only her second win since beating fellow Kiwi Joanne Kumeroa in the World Championships final.

It was an emotional moment as the country's top woolhandlers stood in tribute to 2008 champion Gina Nathan who died last month.

In her absence, and that of Australia-based Kumeroa, who did not compete in New Zealand this season, Alabaster still had to contend with Golden Shears winner Tina Rimene, of Masterton, and 2008 Golden Shears champion Ronnie Goss, of Kimbolton.

But the determination to make-up for herself still being without a Golden Shears title, and to add to her 2004-2006 Te Kuiti treble, was obvious as she won with a margin of almost 30 points over Rimene, who took second place. Goss was third, fourth went to Monica Potae, the only South Island open shearing or woolhandling finalist, and Kerri-Jo Te Huia, of Te Kuiti, was fifth, just 24 hours after finishing sixth in the intermediate shearing final.

Both champions, already ranked as Masters by Shearing Sports New Zealand, gave no hints of imminent retirement from the intensely competitive and time-consuming sport, each looking forward to next season and qualifying for the 2010 World Championships in Wales.

Kirkpatrick said he might think about something else, after the following World championships in Masterton in 2012.

Avery and Kirkpatrick also celebrated the completion of an unbeaten record in eight official contests as a national team in the last nine months by beating Wales representatives Nicky Beynon and Gareth Daniel in the final test of a month-long first series between the two countries in New Zealand.

The 4-0 whitewash followed their World Teams triumph, and a 3-0 series win over The Welsh in the UK last July.

Avery won Friday night's North Island Shearer of the year final, in which Kirkpatrick was second, while diminutive James Fagan won the New Zealand Shears Circuit final, consigning famed Uncle David to second place.

Kirkpatrick's 18-year-old nephew, Ian Kirkpatrick, of Gisborne, made it a Golden Shears and New Zealand championships double when he won the senior title, in which he and two others also went under a sheep a minute, including first-man-off Kelvin Walker, of Taumarunui.

Matene Mason and Sharnie Rimene did their bit in trying to reclaim the mantle of shearing capital of the World for home-town Masterton by winning the intermediate and junior shearing titles respectively. The senior woolhandling title provided a sole 2008-2009 win for Walter Edmonds, of Raetihi, and the junior woolhandling title was won by Catherine Christey, of Te Awamutu.

Results from the 2009 New Zealand Shearing Championships held in Te Kuiti from Thursday to Saturday can be [viewed here](#).

NZ Shearing Champs, Brief - April 05, 2009

Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick made up for the disappointment of a premature elimination from the Golden Shears open championship in Masterton last month by successfully defending his New Zealand open title in Te Kuiti last night.

The 38-year-old Kirkpatrick was not only fastest but also the cleanest in the 20 sheep final which he completed in just 13 minutes 47.39 seconds, ultimately beating runner-up, veteran Golden Shears victor, and home-town hero David Fagan by a comfortable 1.7pts. It was Kirkpatrick's fourth win in five competitions since the Golden Shears. Another Te Kuiti veteran, Dean Ball, was third last night, while World champion Paul Avery, from Toko in Taranaki, had to settle for fourth.

There was better news for World woolhandling champion Sheree Alabaster, who won the New Zealand Open woolhandling title... The 34-year-old Taihape school teacher has now won the Te Kuiti final four times. It was second again for another Golden Shears champion in Tina Rimene, who, despite having won Masterton's big event three times is yet to win in Te Kuiti.

Kirkpatrick and Avery teamed to complete a black singlets 4-0 test series whitewash against Welshman Gareth Daniel and Nicky Beynon.

Oh No! Not another Kirky - April 04, 2009

Open class competition shearers stuck in the dust of prolific winner John Kirkpatrick will have no other Kirky to worry about next year with the graduation to the top class of teenaged nephew Ian Kirkpatrick who yesterday added the national senior title to the Golden Shears senior ribbon he won last month.

But the 18-year-old from Gisborne already has one over his 38-year-old Napier-based uncle, having taken just four weeks after his golden Shears senior title to win at the national championships - John Kirkpatrick won the Golden Shears senior title but, while winning numerous other titles, took 15 years before he won his first title at Te Kuiti last year.

The teenager was quick to thank his uncle who he said had helped him prepare his gear at all the major competitions this year, producing a string of about 10 wins, with just one more event at the Easter Show in Auckland.

It won't end there for the younger Kirkpatrick who in May will be off to Britain for two months' shearing, the third year in a row that he has made the big trek, ahead of his automatic promotion to open class next season.

In yesterday's he was the second of three shearers to cut under 12 minutes in the 12-sheep final, but in the best traditions of "Uncle Johnny" picked up the better quality points to seal the win just a quarter of a point ahead of first-man-off-the-board Kelvin Walker, of Taumarunui.

Masterton, the home of the Golden Shears, picked up a double on Friday night when Matene Mason won the intermediate title and Sharnie Rimene the junior title. The senior woolhandling title was won by Walter Edmonds, of Raetihi, and the junior woolhandling title went to Catherine Christey, of Te Awamutu.

World champion shearer Paul Avery, of Toki in Taranaki, and World champion woolhandler Sheree Alabaster were still in the running to regain the New Zealand titles, each qualifying for tonight's finals.

Shearer of the year title to World champ Avery - April 03, 2009

World champion shearer Paul Avery rocketed back into hot contention for today's New Zealand open title when he won the North Island Shearer of the Year final in Te Kuiti last night (Friday).

Scoring his first win since the Apiti Sports final on February 28, Avery all-but guaranteed the victory with speed as he beat nearest challengers and Hawke's Bay pair John Kirkpatrick and Dion King each by more than 30 seconds in cutting out a 20-sheep pen in 14 minutes 17 seconds, and put a whole sheep around the other three finalists, including Golden Shears winner David Fagan.

With five wins in the event dating back to his first in 19 years ago, the Taranaki farmer who won the World title in Norway in October seemed almost oblivious of his second-placing to Fagan in the Golden Shears final when he told the crowd on the second of three nights at the national championships in the Waitomo Cultural Centre: "I've had a bit of a hard month...I couldn't have asked for a better start to April."

His hot pace kept him comfortably clear of Kirkpatrick, who posted the best quality points, while Dean Ball, of Te Kuiti, swept into third place, also relying on quality points. Avery finished with 53.969pts, Kirkpatrick 55.22pts, and Ball 56.768, while Fagan was fourth, more than five points from the winner.

All five shearers, plus sixth finalist Jerome McCrea, of Wanganui, are among the 24 qualifiers for the open championship quarterfinals starting at 1pm today.

Kirkpatrick was last night a \$1.75 favourite with the TAB, Fagan following at \$4 and Avery, aiming to complete a third Shearer of the Year and New Zealand Open double, was quoted a \$6 third favourite.

Champ firms in Shears Betting - April 03, 2009

The demise of top-ranked New Zealand shearer John Kirkpatrick at the Golden Shears in Masterton last month has meant little to the TAB which has retained him as a warm favourite to win his second New Zealand Open title in Te Kuiti tomorrow (Saturday).

When odds were reopened after Kirkpatrick qualified today just 12th of the 24 for the quarterfinals tomorrow afternoon, the TAB listed him as favourite at \$1.75 - recognising his amazing success rate of 16 wins in 22 competitions this season, most among the very best of class.

The TAB was still offering generous in the odds for home-town hero and shearing icon David Fagan, who has won just two finals this season, but one of them was the Golden Shears open final in Masterton on March 7, when Kirkpatrick was shock elimination in the heats.

Fagan is second favourite at \$4, compared with his opening Golden Shears odds of \$10, while World champion and three-times NZ Open winner Paul Avert is at \$6, Speedshear winner and 2006 Golden Shears champion is at \$8, and Te Kuiti veteran Dean Ball is at \$10, one of New Zealand most successful shearers but still to win the Golden Shears or New Zealand open titles. No other shearer is rated better than a 25-1 shot.

World wool champ eyes-up fourth NZ title - April 03, 2009

World woolhandling champion Sheree Alabaster is lining-up her fourth New Zealand title as top qualifier going into the last day of the 25th New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti tomorrow (Saturday).

The 34-year-old's hopes of regaining the title she last won in 2006 were made a little easier by the shock elimination of teenaged sensation and national open class rankings leader Joel Henare, of Gisborne, in the heats yesterday, and then in the quarterfinals today, the first-round top qualifier Bernadette Forde, of Tuatapere.

Alabaster, from Taihape and recently named Wanganui Sportsperson of the Year in recognition of her World title win in Norway in October, was second of the 15 qualifiers from the 28 who contested yesterday's heats, and headed the semi-final qualifiers comfortably, with a seven-point lead over second-ranked Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu.

But with points starting from scratch at each stage, Alabaster has to maintain the form to beat the consistent Herbert, and other hot contenders in Golden Shears champion Tina Rimene, of Masterton, and 2008 Golden Shears champion Veronica (Ronnie) Goss, of Kimbolton.

Troubled by an ankle injury for part of the time since returning home in November, Alabaster had to wait till last Sunday to claim her first win in New Zealand this season, at the Taranaki Shears in Stratford.

Qualifiers for the New Zealand Woolhandling Championships open semi-final tomorrow morning are, in order: Sheree Alabaster (Taihape) 1, Keryn Herbert (Te Awamutu) 2, Penny Kerekere (Gisborne) 3, Tia Potae (Milton) 4, Tina Rimene (Masterton) 5, Ronnie Goss (Kimbolton) 6, Kerry-Jo Te Huia (Te Kuiti) 7, George Hawkins (Martinborough) 8, Hanatia Tipene (Porangahau) 9, Monica Potae (Milton) 10.

Southern Shears Hope Dips Out - April 03, 2009

Southern national championships shearing hopeful Nathan Stratford was a notable deletion from the New Zealand open shearing championships after being eliminated in the heats in Te Kuiti today.

One of 63 open class shearers on the board at the 25th championships, the Invercargill-based former New Zealand representative failed to make the 24 for the quarterfinals starting at 1pm tomorrow, but had some quality company to share the moment in Te Kuiti veteran Digger Balme, who was also eliminated.

Balme missed qualifying by six-tenths of a point at 27th on the list, while Stratford was 30th, 1.5pts off the tail of the qualifying field, which was headed by World champion and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery, followed by the home-town pair of past winners Dean Ball and Golden Shears champion David Fagan... Hot favourite John Kirkpatrick, with 16 wins in 22 competitions this season, qualified comfortably in 12th place.

With Stratford's departure, the South Island hopes of winning the title for the first time since Edsel Forde's victory in 1993 are left with his brother, Darrin Forde, of Tuatapere, and Rakaia shearer Tony Coster, who won the PGG Wrightson National series final at the Golden Shears in Masterton four weeks ago.

Filtered through the usual list of New Zealand country towns testing even the most geographically accomplished are two overseas competitors in Whangamomona-based Scotsman Gavin Mutch, and Welsh test-team member Gareth Daniel.

The 24 qualifiers for the quarterfinals at the New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti are (in order of qualifying): Paul Avery (Stratford) 1, Dean Ball (Te Kuiti) 2, David Fagan (Te Kuiti) 3, Gavin Mutch (Whangamomona) 4, Jason Win (Ikamatua) 5, Dion King (Napier) 6, Chris Brears (Matiere) 7, Sean Edmonds (Wanganui) 8, Jerome McCrea (Wanganui) 9, James Fagan (Te Kuiti) 10, Alan Bramley (Hikurangi) 11, John Kirkpatrick (Napier) 12, Jordon Marshall (Pio Pio) 13, Angus Moore (Blenheim) 14, Tony Coster (Rakaia) 15, David Buick (Eketahuna) 16, Phil Wedd (Napier) 17, Roger Neil (Taumarunui) 18, Darrin Forde (Tuatapere) 19, Jimmy Edmonds (Raetihi) 20, James Ritchie (Pio Pio) 21, Gareth Daniel (Wales) 22, Colin Thirkell (Te Kuiti) 23, Lawrence Aspinall (Eketahuna) 24.

NZ Shears Champs - April 03, 2009

World lamb shearing tally record holder and Hawke's Bay Dion King turned the tables on hometown hero and Golden Shears champion David Fagan to win a one-sheep speedshear and a \$2000 prize for barely a minute's work on the first night of the New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti last night (Thursday).

All had seemed lost for King when he was beaten by Fagan in the semi-final, but the three judges had the last say when they looked at the finished job and disqualified the favourite, letting King back into the final in which he steamed through his sheep in 22.95secs to beat Taranaki-based Scotsman Gavin Mutch by three-tenths of a second.

Mutch picked up \$1000 for his effort, World champion show shearer and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery claimed third place, Fagan fourth, and Napier shearer Phil Wedd a surprise fifth.

For King and Fagan it was a near reverse of the 20-sheep Golden Shears open final in Masterton on March 7, when Fagan was let-through for his 16th win in the prestige event after King opened a cut which cost him five points, and the title.

All five shearers will today be shearing in the heats of the New Zealand open championship, in which speedshear sixth-placegetter John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, will start a defence of the title he won last year, all hoping to make their way safely through five sheep to qualify among the top 24 for the quarterfinals tomorrow afternoon (Saturday). The semi-final will be later in the afternoon, and the 20-sheep final tomorrow night (Saturday).

There was some good news for the King Country elsewhere on the shearing board on the opening day, with Pio Pio youngster Tom Moorhouse just beating Gisborne shearer Paul Lewis in the senior speedshear, with a winning time of 38.22secs, while earlier in the day Taumarunui teenager T.J. Christiansen won the novice shearing championship final. Taking just over three minutes for his single sheep, 23 seconds behind race-winner Rowan Moorhouse, of Te Awamutu, he did enough with the quality to claim victory with Moorhouse ultimately relegated to sixth, and Bryce Guy, of Kaeo, claiming the runner-up's sash.

NZ Shearing Champs - April 02, 2009

Prime Minister John Key is being put on the spot at the New Zealand Shearing Championships which open in Te Kuiti today (thursday), with an invitation to do his bit for the struggling wool industry by shearing at least part of a sheep.

But if he turns the opportunity down, on the final day of the championships on Saturday, he won't be short of other Parliamentarians ready to fill shear the load with Kaikoura MP Colin King and Maori Party MP and Minister of Maori Affairs Dr Pita Sharples also on the guest list for the 25th anniversary of Te Kuiti's big event, which includes the Great New Zealand Sheep Muster and Scanda Running of the Sheep, in which up to 2000 sheep will be shepherded through the town.

Mr King, who lived for several years near Otorohanga, will be present as a past open champion, while Dr Sharples, having come from rural Takapau in Central Hawke's Bay is known to have spotted at least the last side of an ovine challenge in his career. Another guest, former All Black Glen Osborne, has already taken up the invitation and will shear a sheep with a human-powered handpiece.

More than 300 shearers and woolhandlers are competing in the championships, the features of which will be Saturday night's open shearing and woolhandling finals, a shearing test between New Zealand and Walees in which the Kiwis hope to complete a 4-0 series victory, and the annual inter-island shearing and woolhandling matches.

Napier shearer and reigning open champion John Kirkpatrick will be out to make amends for his demise last month at the Golden Shears in Masterton, facing a showdown with local hero and veteran Golden Shears victor David Fagan. They first have to make their way through the heats which dominate the second day tomorrow (friday).

The open woolhandling event will be an emotional affair, following the death of reigning champion Gina Nathan last month.