

That man Fagan wins and, faces the dream - April 11, 2010

Veteran shearing champion David Fagan has landed possibly the ultimate long-service award but possibly also one of his greatest challenges after winning his 17th New Zealand Championships open title in home-town Te Kuiti on Saturday night.

With the 48-year-old's victory came a place in the New Zealand team for the 14th World Championships in three months' time, where he will be aiming to win the individual title for a sixth time

With teammate, new Golden Shears champion and rookie international Cam Ferguson, 26, of Waipawa, he will also be targeting a seventh World teams title.

But he also carries the hopes of a sport aghast that he has never been recognised at national Sportsman of the Year level, yet confident that if he wins another title at the Royal Welsh Show on July 22 he'll be a shoo-in for a Halberg Award when judges ponder their options at the end of the year.

For the first time, after career open-class win No 598 dating back to his first in February 1983, Fagan conceded publicly on Saturday night it had been his goal all season.

"You've got to be careful what you dream for," he said, as prizes worth over \$20,000 became secondary to black-singlet target. "But it was a goal of mine all season. All of us have been thinking about it, whether we could get in the team, and I can't quite believe it."

"I'm probably past my prime but I'll take it," he said, but would have found few to agree, for he had, after all, been first of the six finalists to finish the 20 sheep, stopping the clock at 14min 52.7sec, four seconds ahead of second-man-off Ferguson.

But, with just 23.25seconds covering the first four, there was still room for what could have been the biggest upset in Open-class shearing in many years.

Fifth-man off and Far North youngster Rowland Smith, less than half Fagan's age and a shock qualifier for the final, came back from almost 50 seconds down to be runner-up, his superior quality getting him to just 0.27pts from victory.

From Ruawai, but based for most of the season in Hawke's Bay where early-season injury stopped him from joining brother Matt in a World eight-hour ewe-shearing record in January, the 23-year-old Smith did not reach a final on the 60-show Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar till mid-February, when he won the Counties title at Pukekohe.

It was his only win of the season, while, including Fagan's win and victory in the North Island Shearer of the Year final 24 hours



OLD AND NEW: Te Kuiti shearing veteran David Fagan, 48 (left), with runner-up and Far North bolter Rowland Smith, 23, after they were first and second respectively in the New Zealand Championships open final in Te Kuiti on Saturday, April 10, 2010. Fagan qualified to represent New Zealand at the World Championships in Wales on July 19-22, where he will be chasing a sixth World individual title.



AGELESS CHAMP: Shearing veteran David Fagan, 48, moments after shearing 20 sheep in 14min 52.75sec (44.64sec per sheep) in the final of the New Zealand Open shearing championship at Te Kuiti on Saturday, April 10, 2010. the fastest of six shearers in the final, his time was enough to hold the challengers who went for quality points, and he won the title for a 17th time in its 26 years. With a career tally of 598 open-class titles dating back to February 1983, he now represents New Zealand at the 14th World championships in Wales in July, aiming for a sixth World individual title.

and victory in the North Island Shearer of the Year final 24 hours earlier, the rest of the finalists ended the season with a combined total of 28 wins. That was without the top-ranked shearer, Napier gun John Kirkpatrick, who was a shock semi-final elimination on Saturday, having shorn in 26 finals during the season, winning eight.

Fagan had won more than 40 finals in a quarter-century of Te Kuiti's three feature events but hadn't had a victory on the stage since a New Zealand Shears Circuit win in 2007.

He gave the first indication of a Wales World championships swansong when he won a 16th Golden Shears open title last year, five years after his next-most-recent win in Masterton's big event. In the happy hunting ground of the UK last year, he won at Glenarm Castle and the Great Yorkshire Show on successive day, and back in New Zealand won the Great Raihania Shears title at the Hawke's Bay Show in October, the New Zealand Corriedale title in Christchurch in November, and the Aria Sports and Taumarunui Jamboree titles in February.

He was third to Ferguson at the Golden Shears and went on to complete 23 finals for the season, and finish second to Kirkpatrick in the rankings.

Shearing Sports New Zealand chairman John Fagan doesn't believe public expectation will place any pressure on his younger brother, and said: "I think he's been quietly working away on this all season, particularly his fitness."

"It was an amazing achievement for David, and amazing feat for our sport, and also a very proud moment for our family," he said.

"What I can say about David is this special thing, that he's got his head-space right, which is a very important thing in all sports. He's very happy at home, it's the whole package."

"And he's also seen guys be top qualifiers in semi-finals, known them to go to pieces, and know they'll never win it. I think he'll put (the win in) Te Kuiti behind him now, and get on with it."

Taranaki shearer and reigning World Champion Paul Avery finished third, and misses the chance to defend the title, his ousting meaning the black-singlets team in Wales will have only one of the six-strong machine shearing, blade shearing and woolhandling team which claimed four of the six titles in Norway in 2008.

As well as Fagan and Ferguson, New Zealand will be represented by Canterbury blades-shearers Brian Thompson and Alan Gemmell, and woolhandlers Keryn Herbert and reigning champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape.

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in July, aiming for a sixth World individual title.



WOOL WONDER: Gisborne teenager Joel Henare,

New Zealand got a big leg-up towards the championships when Kirkpatrick and Fagan's nephew, James, beat Welshman Gareth Daniel and Gareth Evans on a Saturday night, to complete a whitewash of four tests, and one unofficial match, on the Wales teams' tour preparing for a big performance in hosting the World Championships.



WOOL WONDER: Gisborne teenager Joel Henare, winner of the Open Woolhandling final at the 26th New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti on Saturday, April 10, 2010.

Gisborne teenager Joel Henare became the youngest ever New Zealand Championships or Golden Shears open woolhandling champion when he turned the tables on 39-year-old Golden Shears winner Joanne Kumeroa, of Whanganui.

Henare was the only rankings-winner to claim a New Zealand Championships title.

The senior shearing title was won by Feilding shearer Davy Garland, with rankings winner Aaron Haynes, also of Feilding, finishing second, and Waipukurau teenage and Modern Apprenticeship success-story Tysson Hema won the intermediate final by a narrow margin from intermediate rankings winner Wi Poutu Ngarangione, of Gisborne.

Another Manawatu teenager, Kimbolton's Sarah Goss, became the first female to win a New Zealand Championships shearing title, when she won the Junior final, in which the Junior rankings winner, Jack Fagan, son of David, was third. Goss later also won the Junior Encouragement Circuit Final.

The Senior woolhandling final was won by Natalie Collier, of Opotiki, and the junior title by Pahiatua handler Kim Sowry, who also won her Encouragement Circuit final.

The top ranked senior woolhandler for the season was Amy Ruki, of Invercargill, and the top-ranked Junior was Juliette Lyon, of Alexandra.

Fagan to chase sith World title - April 10, 2010

Shearing icon David Fagan brought off yet another stunning victory tonight with a 17th New Zealand Open title to win a shot at a sixth World championship in Wales in July.

But it was a close call for the global shearing giant who won by less than three-tenths of a point from bolter Rowland Smith, who at 23 is less than half the age of the 48-and-a-half year-old champion.

Before his home crowd in Te Kuiti, Fagan admitted for the first time he'd been dreaming all year of the win, and the chance to win the World title in Wales where he was beaten by close friend and New Zealand teammate Alan McDonald in 1994.

He was first finished the 20-sheep final, taking 14min 52.75sec, as 23 seconds separated the first four home, but it was Smith who, fifth off the board in 15min 40.15sec who came closest as he pulled back the time-points margin with the better display of quality. When all points were added, Fagan won with 55.888pts to Smith's 56.158pts. Reigning World Champion Paul Avery was third, missing out on the chance to defend the title, and fourth was Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson, who last month claimed the first of the two New Zealand machine-shearing positions in Wales when he won the Golden Shears Open.

Fagan had not won the New Zealand final since 2006, but showed he was on target when he won the North Island Shearer of the Year title on Friday night.

World champ lines up title defence - April 10, 2010

World champion shearer Paul Avery has lined up a chance to defend his title in Wales after heading the six qualifiers for tonight's New Zealand Championships final in Te Kuiti.

Qualifying with a stunning performance in this afternoon's semi-finals, the Stratford gun has to win tonight's final to qualify for the championships in Wales, or finish second if the event is won by Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson, who claimed the first machine shearing position in the team when he won the Golden Shears open final five weeks ago.

Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, Avery's teammate in 2008 when New Zealand won both the individual and teams titles at the last World Championships on Norway, was the surprise elimination today, after being ranked No 1 shearer in New Zealand for the season. Far North shearer Rowland Smith, from Ruawai, loomed as a bolter when he qualified for the final to be shorn over sheep, starting at 9pm.

Qualifiers in order of qualifying are: Paul Avery (Stratford), Dion King (Napier), Rowland Smith (Ruawai), David Fagan (Te Kuiti), Nathan Stratford (Invercargill), and cam Ferguson (Waipawa).

Fagan's long time between drinks: Yeah right! - April 10, 2010

It may have been a long time between drinks but the warnings were out that it wouldn't be long before the next as shearing icon David Fagan won his 17th North Island Shearer of the Year final at the New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti last night (Friday).

The final served as a prelude to today's New Zealand Championships open final, which will decide the second machine shearing member of the national team for the 14th World Championships in Wales in July.

In a victory speech, Fagan wished his fellow competitors all the best for the big showdown, although he is the TAB favourite to win the event and shoot for a sixth World title, at the age of 48.

Fagan won the Shearer of the Year title when it was first held in 1985, but the last time he'd won the title before last night was in 2003.

His victory, by less than a point, was all that stopped new Golden Shears champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, from adding the title to the South Island Shearer of the Year title he won in Gore in February. It was the first final Ferguson had reached since his Golden Shears win in Masterton on March 6.

Fagan's triumph wasn't the only one in the family on the second night of the three-day championships, the last of more than 60 events in the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar.

Teenaged son Jack was named the top-ranked Junior for the season, although he was only third in last night's Junior championship final, in which history was made by Kimbolton teenager Sarah Goss who became the first female to win any of the four championship shearing grades. Golden Shears winner Brett Roberts, of Gore, was second.

The intermediate title was won by Waipukurau teenager Tysson Hema, turning the tables on Golden Shears champion and prolific winner Wi Poutu Ngarangione, of Gisborne.

Ngarangione, however, was named the top-ranked intermediate competitor for the season, Feilding shearer Aaron Haynes the top senior, and Napier's John Kirkpatrick maintained his place as the top-ranked Open competitor.

Gisborne teenager Joel Henare retained the title of top-ranked open woolhandler, the top senior for the season is Amy-Lee Ruki, of Invercargill, and the top junior woolhandler is Juliette Lyon, of Alexandra.

But the championships' junior woolhandling final was won by Kim Sowry, of Pahiatua, and the senior title by Natalie Collier, of Opotiki.

Fagan favourite - April 09, 2010

Veteran King Country shearer David Fagan remains favourite to win the New Zealand Shearing Championships open final in new TAB odds released after the heats today.

The TAB is also offering odds on top-three finishes, a range of head-to-head options, and who will join Golden Shearers winner and Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson in the New Zealand team for the World Championships in Wales in July.

TAB odds on the 24 qualifiers for Saturday's quarterfinals are:

\$3: David Fagan (Te Kuiti).

\$4: John Kirkpatrick (Napier)

\$5: Cam Ferguson (Waipawa)

\$7: Dion King (Napier), Dean Ball (Te Kuiti)

\$10: Paul Avery (Stratford)

\$15: James Fagan (Te Kuiti).

\$30: Nathan Stratford (Invercargill), Gavin Mutch (Scotland and Whangamomona), Darin Forde (Winton).

\$40: Jerome McCrea (Whanganui), Rowland Smith (Ruawai).

\$80: Ian Kirkpatrick Jnr (Gisborne), Digger Balme (Te Kuiti), Gareth Daniel (Wales), Kelvin Walker (Pio Pio), Alan Bramley (Kaeo), Murray Henderson (Feilding).

\$100: Clint Bellamy (Stratford), Sam Welch (Waikaretu), Phill Wedd (Napier), Neil Fagan (Te Kuiti), Alan McDonald (Pio Pio).

Shear battle looms at NZ champs - April 09, 2010

The competition shearing season has been guaranteed a fever-pitch end in Te Kuiti with all of the top hopes making it safely through the Open championship heats today.

The 24 qualifiers were headed by home-town hope Dean Ball, but also include key several fellow New Zealand World championships team contenders, including five-times World champion David Fagan, also from Te Kuiti and who, at the age of 48 justified TAB favouritism for possibly his last big competition in New Zealand and qualified comfortably third among the 24 to shear in the quarterfinals tomorrow afternoon.

Fagan's odds eased to \$3 today, and second favourite John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, moved-in to \$4, after winning his two most recent competitions and qualifying in sixth place, and TAB was keeping new Golden Shears champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, in check as second favourite at \$5, despite him making the cut only at No 21.

Ball was at \$7 with in-form Napier shearer Dion King, who qualified in 10th place, while reigning World champion Paul Avery, of Stratford, who qualified in seventh place, was quoted at \$10.

At stake in tomorrow night's final is the second machine shearing place in the New Zealand team for the World Championships in Wales on July 19-22. The first place went to Ferguson when he won the Golden Shears final on March 6. If he wins, the runner-up will join the team, which also includes two woolhandlers and two blades shearers.

The TAB is also operating betting on who will join Ferguson in the team, on top-three finishes, and on a series of head-to-head options involving the top hopes.

The qualifiers for the New Zealand shearing championships Open quarterfinals starting at 1pm tomorrow (saturday april 10) are:

01	Dean	Ball	(Te	Kuiti)
02	Gavin	Mutch	(Huntly,	Scotland)
03	David	Fagan	(Te	Kuiti)
04	Darrin	Forde		(Winton)
05	James	Fagan	(Te	Kuiti)
06	John	Kirkpatrick		(Napier)
07	Paul	Avery		(Stratford)
08	Rowland	Smith		(Ruawai)
09	Jerome	McCrea		(Whanganui)
10	Dion	King		(Napier)
11	Ian	Kirkpatrick	Jnr	(Gisborne)
12	Murray	Henderson		(Feilding)
13	Gareth	Daniel		(Wales)
14	Digger	Balme	(Te	Kuiti)
15	Kelvin	Walker	(Pio	Pio)
16	Alan	Bramley		(Kaeo)
17	Nathan	Stratford		(Invercargill)
18	Roger	Neil		(Taumarunui)
19	Clint	Bellamy		(Stratford)
20	Sam	Welch		(Waikaretu)
21	Cam	Ferguson		(Waipawa)
22	Alan	McDonald	(Pio	Pio)
23	Phill	Wedd		(Napier)
24	Neil Fagan (Te Kuiti)			

A royal show as Coasties storm the North - April 04, 2010

The Coasties came to town and left with almost all the goodies at the Royal Easter Show's Northern Shears in Auckland on Saturday.

Napier-based John Kirkpatrick, who grew-up on the East Coast, won the Open shearing final, while the Golden Shears senior and intermediate champions, Gisborne teenagers Tama Niania and Wi Poutu Ngarangione returned to winning form the claim victory in their penultimate performances in their grades before upgraded next season.

The junior final was won by Manawatu teenager Sarah Goss, of Apiti.

The open win was a significant success for Kirkpatrick, turning the tables on 2009 winner and World Champion Paul Avery, of Stratford, in the last competition on the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar before next weekend's New Zealand Championships in Te Kuiti, where they and the rest of New Zealand's top shearers battle for the last position in New Zealand's team for the year's World championships in Wales in July.

It was, however, one of the closest of finishes, although Kirkpatrick hit the triple of best points for time, the board job, and quality in the pens afterwards. He was first to finish the 20 sheep, but with a slick time of 14min 46.38sec stopped the clock just 1.6 seconds ahead of Avery. The 0.08pts advantage for time was supplemented by margins of 0.05pts in the board job and 0.35pts in the judging pens, to give Kirkpatrick the win by 54.769 penalty points to 55.249. Far North shearer Rowland Smith was more than three points away in third place. Te Kuiti shearers Dean Ball and James Fagan were fourth and fifth.

It was the second win in a week Kirkpatrick after an 11-show drought in which he was runner-up seven times. New Zealand Championships TAB favourite David Fagan, also of Te Kuiti, was eliminated in the semi-final and Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson, who claimed the first of the two machine black-singlet shearing positions in Wales, did not compete at the weekend.

Dramatic decider in blade shears - April 03, 2010

Canterbury workmates Brian Thomson and Allan Gemmell have won the two blade-shearing places in Shearing Sports New Zealand's team for the 14th Golden Shears World Championships in Wales this year after a dramatic last round of their qualifying series today at the Oxford A and P Show, west of Christchurch.

Thomson, from West Melton, had already qualified before the day started but Gemmell, who lives near Rangiora, had to come from behind to beat Geraldine shearer Phil Oldfield to decide the second position in an unprecedented four-sheep shear-off.

Trailing on points at the start of the day, the last show of eight during the summer in the Mark Marshall Memorial Blade Circuit, Gemmell forced the decider when he was second in the Oxford Open Blades final, for which Oldfield failed to qualify.

Gemmell was first finished in the shear-off in 13min 43.78sec, beating Oldfield by 14.5 seconds, but conceded two penalty points in the board judging, leaving the result in the hands of judges in the pens before the result was decided.

Earlier, Thomson also failed to qualify for the Oxford Show final which was won by Mike McConnell, of Cave, South Canterbury, whose points were still insufficient to put him into World Championships reckoning.

Thomson and Gemmell will be members of a six-strong Shearing Sports New Zealand team for the championships at the Royal Welsh Show on July 19-22. They will join woolhandlers Keryn Herbert, from Te Awamutu, and reigning champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, and Golden Shears open shearing champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa. The sixth member will be decided in the Open shearing final at the New Zealand Championships in Te Kuiti next Saturday.

Last clip for blade shearing hopes - April 02, 2010

New Zealand's depleting band of blades shearers gather in the small Canterbury town of Oxford tomorrow (saturday) to decide who will clip for their country at the World shearing and woolhandling championships in Wales in July.

But for Timaru meatworker and former World championships finalist Bill Michelle, who won a New Zealand titles at the Canterbury Show in November, the chance to retain the place he had at the last World Championships in 2008 is already gone. Still competing, Michelle says he hasn't got enough points to make the cut in the Mark

Marshall Memorial Blades Circuit which ends at the Oxford A and P Show and from which the two shearers will be chosen.

Darfield shearer Brian Thomson is already a certainty, he says, and his teammate will be either Phil Oldfield, of Geraldine, Mike McConnell, of Cave, or Alan Gemmell, of Rangiora. "I missed out at Masterton last month," he said, referring to the inclusion of the Golden Shears in the otherwise South Island-only series for the first time.

"I haven't shorn a sheep since," he said. "The three will have shorn a few sheep in the last week or so, but we're a bit of a novelty now."

Thomson won two events at Omarama and Rangiora early in the season, McConnell won the Silver Shears in Waimate, Gemmell won at Ashburton and Reefton, and Oldfield won the special Golden Shears 50th anniversary title, while also among about a dozen shearing at Oxford will be Timaru veteran John Kennedy, who won the Australian title in Warialda, NSW, five months ago.

The two top shearers in the series will be part of a six-strong New Zealand team for the World championships. Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson has one of the machine-shearing berths after winning the Golden Shears Open final on March 6 and the other other will be decided at next week's New Zealand Championships in Te Kuiti. The woolhandlers, Keryn Herbert, from Te Awamutu, and reigning champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, claimed their places in a selection series final at the Golden Shears.

Machine shearing is also on the Oxford programme, but most of the country's best will be competing tomorrow at the Royal Easter Show in Auckland.