

Sir David Fagan, the shearing champ is Knighted - December 31, 2015

Multiple World and Golden Shears shearing champion and World records breaker David Fagan will now be known as Sir David Fagan KNZM, ONZM, MNZM after being made a Knight in the 2017 New Zealand New Year Honours announced today.

Now 54 and having this year twice retired from top competition after a 33-year Open-class career which reaped a phenomenal 642 individual wins in 11 countries, the Te Kuiti shearing legend and new Shearing Sports New Zealand chairman is one of four people made Knight or Dame Companions of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

The list is headed by the supreme honour of ONZ (Order of New Zealand) bestowed on dual Rugby World Cup winning All Blacks captain Richie McCaw.

While considered by many a long overdue more-elite recognition for Sir David, who had received the MNZM in 1999 and ONZM in 2007, the new Knight considered it "not about me" and "big for shearing".

He said there are 60 competitions on the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar. "That's about 2400 people running these events, all voluntarily," he says. "A bit of this is for each of them. It's not so much about me, as for the sport, and the rural industry which supports our sport."

But he was quick to praise those close to him - father Chris (who died in 2002), mother June, now 90, still driving and living in Te Kuiti, brothers Robin, John, Ken, Geoff(deceased) and sister Helen, wife and the new Lady Wendy Fagan, son and fellow shearer Jack, and daughter and air hostess Jenna.

"Dad and Geoff would have been beside themselves, and it's good that mum is here to experience," said Fagan, whose lineage does include two others who carried the title of "Sir" - Mayors of Dublin Sir John Fagan and Sir Richard Fagan, 16 generations ago in the 1300 and 1400s.

It was the modern-era John, particularly, but also his brothers who propelled him onto the global shearing stage as he set about a record-breaking career, with many milestones likely to never be repeated.

Much of it was based around the World Championships, the Golden Shears in Masterton, and the New Zealand Championships he helped establish in Te Kuiti, as well as a series of World records he broke in the woolshed, and dozens of trips to the UK where he had more than 140 of his victories.

While having been a Golden Shears senior finalist in 1981, the big arrival was in 1984 when he was just beaten by brother John in the Open final, but new magazine The New Zealand Shearer (now Shearing Magazine) was concise when it was first published later that year with the cover photo and story on the rising gun: "DAVID FAGAN. Destined to be champion."

The following year he represented New Zealand for the first time, and at Waitanguru shore a new World Record of 748 lambs in nine hours, one of the earliest attempts with new rules and under which he would set seven records, with bests of 810 on lambs in 1992 and 702 on ewes in 1994.

He had at least 43 wins on the Masterton stage, including two of his record five World individual titles, one of his record seven World teams titles, his record 16 Golden Shears Open titles from 1986 to 2009, and his record 9 wins in the final of the national circuit, currently known as the PGG Wrightson National.

Sir David has also won a record 16 New Zealand Open Championships finals in Te Kuiti, where he was a founding member of the King Country Shears committee in 1985, and has seen it through all 30 years of the New Zealand Championships that the event became.

He shored at least once in almost every competition in the country - there used to be 85 - and he made last season's swansong a geographical highlight, with finals at 28 venues from Winton to Auckland, including 13 wins.

His last was in the New Zealand Shears Circuit final at Te Kuiti in April. Having initially announced the championships were his last, he was lured back for a swansong in the UK, shearing the last five of over 120 tests for New Zealand.

Usually in the same sentences as rugby great Sir Colin Meads, also from Te Kuiti, Sir David is idolised in Wales where he had a record 14 wins in the Royal Welsh Show Open from 1988 to 2014, which was this year won by his son.

Sir David was unable to secure one last individual win on the tour, but had the pleasure of shearing five finals with his son, and with Hawke's Bay gun Dion King tying a test series against Wales.

Among Fagan's prouder moments were his two-stand record of 1603 lambs in 1988 with Alan MacDonald, the pair having been born just days apart and growing up together around Pio Pio, near Te Kuiti, the pair reaching two more pinnacles in 1994-95 when they won the World teams title in Wales and were recognised at home with the Waikato Sports Team of the Year Award.

Sir David has also shorn and won hundreds of speedshears, many held in pubs and clubs, setting a World record for the fastest single sheep, while his Golden Shears performances include in 2003 a 15min 27.4sec Open final, still the fastest time for the 20-sheep, six man showdown.

It was always done with quality, which Sir David displayed in a different form over the last week when overwhelmed by media, who had been allowed to contact recipients under embargo ahead of the announcement at 5am (NZST) on December 31.

Returning from two days' break at Whangamata to take care of the cows and water and help three shearers prepare for a World record attempt in a King Country woolshed next week, Sir David wondered for a moment who had put him up for the honour, and asked: "It wasn't Shearing Sports New Zealand, was it?"

Possibly not, he's been chairman of the sports' national body since August, and wasn't aware of any moves. But he is aware there's a lot of hard work ahead currently planning the next World shearing and woolhandling championships, in Invercargill on February 9-11, 2017, with funding targets of several hundred thousand dollars.

The suspects would have been many, with widespread grievance in the shearing sports and industry that his lack of recognition at New Zealand sport's Halberg Awards over many years may have reflected a lack of public acceptance of competition shearing and woolhandling as sport.

Sir Colin Meads commented earlier this year to the Waitomo News: "They tried years ago to have him included in the Halberg Awards when he was the World champion but back then shearing wasn't considered a sport."

Agricultural broadcasters Jamie McKay and Dominic George backed both an Halberg Award and a Knighthood in on-air campaigns on rural radio programme The Farming Show.

And in the Wairarapa Times-Age, in an editorial claiming the gun as "one of Wairarapa's most celebrated sporting identities," sports writer Gary Caffell wrote in 2013: "Surely the day will come - and sooner rather than later - when David Fagan joins the likes of Brian Lochore, Colin Meads and Richard Hadlee, men who have reached the very pinnacles of their sporting pursuits and been knighted for their efforts. Sir David Fagan has a nice ring about it, doesn't it?"

Sir David once wondered aloud, commenting after his 2007 MNZM was announced that the greatest media interest seemed to have come from that honour and his battering in a 2004 Fight for Life charity boxing match with actor Manu Bennett.

Perhaps next was his 2000 Golden Shears win - the 11th of 12 in a row - which came just 10 weeks after he broke his collarbone in a farmbike accident.

He's a finalist in the Waikato awards again in February, after winning his local Waitomo District award in November for a seventh time.

National Circuit hopefuls angle for early qualifying - December 14, 2015

At least six shearers have almost guaranteed their places in the final stages of the PGG Wrightson National Circuit with just three of the five qualifying rounds completed.

South Island shearers Nathan Stratford, Tony Coster, Grant Smith, Angus Moore and Troy Pyper, and Napier gun John Kirkpatrick each have 20pts or more, usually enough to make the cut for the 12 places in the showdown at the Golden Shears in March.

The cut-off at 12th position last season was Gavin Mutch's 17pts, in 2014 Gavin Rowlands and Doug Smith made it at 14pts, and in 2013 Paerata Abraham was last-man-in on 15pts.



Nathan Stratford, during the 2014 PGG Wrightson National final, which he won. He leads the contenders for this season's title after three of the five qualifying rounds.

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The points follow the South Island rounds at Alexandra (finewool), Waimate (fullwool) and Christchurch (corriedale).

The next leg is on lambs at the Rangitikei Sports Shears in Marton on February 6, and the final qualifying round is on second-shear at the Pahiatua Shears on February 28.

The top 12, based on points for placings at the five shows, qualify for the semi-finals on the third day of the Golden Shears in Masterton on March 5, the top six then qualifying for the final a few hours later.

The winner of the final, shorn over a 15-sheep mix of the five wool types, wins a place in the 2016-2017 season New Zealand trans-tasman series team, as long as they are eligible to represent New Zealand. The winner also claims the McSkimming Memorial Triple Crown, on which the event was founded in 1973.

Leading the field is 2014 winner Stratford, of Invercargill, followed next by four-times winner Coster, of Rakaia, and 2013 winner and four-times Golden Shears Open champion Kirkpatrick, of Napier.

Points, in order of current placings, are:

- 1: Nathan Stratford, 31pts.
- 2 equal: Tony Coster 27pts, John Kirkpatrick 27pts.
- 4: Grant Smith 24pts.
- 5 equal: Angus Moore 23pts, Troy Pyper 23pts.
- 7: Paerata Abraham 16pts.
- 8: Gavin Mutch 14pts.
- 9: David Buick 13pts.
- 10: Ringakaha Paewai 9pts.
- 11: Hemi Braddick 8pts.
- 12: Colin O'Neill 6pts,
- 13 equal: Abraham Berkelaar 5pts, Brett Roberts 5pts, Chris Vickers 5pts.
- 16 equal: Jack Fagan 4pts, Aaron Haynes 4pts.
- 18: Andy Mainland 3pts.
- 19 equal: Turi Edmonds 2pts, Eru Weeds 2pts.
- 21: Colin Dennison 1pt



Tony Coster, defending champion and four-times winner of the PGG Wrightson National Circuit.



John Kirkpatrick with some of the spoils of victory after winning the PGG Wrightson National Circuit in 2013, a year's use of a Hyundai Santa Fe. Bouncing back from most of last season off with injury, he's a top contender again.