

Weekend Wrap - February 27 2012

Confirmation that the Golden Shears Open final will be one of the best in years and the emergence of several overseas competitors dominated the big weekend in the Central North Island as hundreds of shearers and woolhandlers had their last big shakedowns before the Shears and the World Championships.

Stars of the show were Hawke's Bay-based Northlander Rowland Smith, seemingly ageless King Country icon David Fagan, and Hastings gun Dion King.

Smith won the Open finals at Taumarunui on Friday and Aptiti the next day, extending a picket-fence formline to seven wins in just four weeks - results which had the TAB installing him as favourite to win the big one in Masterton, the first time in four years that it had been anyone else but Napier's John Kirkpatrick.

But he missed out on what would have been a rare cleansweep of the pre-shears triple- header when Dion King, of Hastings, won a classic final at the Pahiatua Shears.

Meanwhile, David Fagan was runner-up in all three events, his Aptiti placing the fifth time he had been second in Smith's big sequence.

Kirkpatrick was third in Taumarunui, missed the cut at Aptiti and won the Open Plate on the new six-stand board at Aptiti, and was sixth at Pahiatua, his distance from the winning purses indicating his focus is more on the World Championship rather than a fourth Golden Shears Open title.

Interesting finalists at Taumarunui were Scotsman and Whangamomona farmer Gavin Mutch, Dannevirke's Adam Brausch, and Te Kuiti's Digger Balme, fourth, fifth and sixth respectively, although Balme was first-off in a slick 15min 18.35, the fastest time in the three finals.

At Aptiti there was just a second in it as Fagan (17min 23sec) just pipped Smith, and in Pahiatua King was in charge most of the way, finishing in 16min 49.09sec, 18 seconds ahead of Fagan, the next to finish.



Daniel Boillot, of France, fifth in the Senior final at Pahiatua. His World championships teammate, Thimoleon Resneau, reached the semi-final.



Stephanie Kauschus, of Germany, who was second in the Junior final at Taumarunui, beaten only by 15-year-old Dyylan McGruddy, of Masterton, his first win. Kauschus competes as a woolhandler at the World Championships.

Waipawa's Cam Ferguson did not compete over the weekend, resting his back in the lead-up to the defence of his World title in Masterton this week.

As well as the home country competitors, competitors from seven countries reached shearing finals during the weekend, notably German World Championships woolhandler Stephanie Kauschus, second in the Taumarunui Junior shearing final, and Frenchman Daniel Boillot, fifth in the Pahiatua Senior final.

Joanne Kumeroa gave every indication she's after another Golden Shears title and another World title as she won two of the Open finals, at Taumarunui and at Sunday's Pre-Shears Championships at the Massey University farm north of Masterton.

The placings were well shared, with Sheree Alabaster (Taihape), Keryn Herbert (Te Awamutu), Veronica (Ronnie) Goss (Kimbolton), and Jonathan Haakull (Norway) following her home at Taumarunui, and Joel Henare (Gisborne), Alabaster, and Emaraina Braddick (Eketahuna) filling the placings on Sunday.

Goss won on home territory at Apiti, where Alabaster's second made her the only woolhandler to make all three finals. Herbert was third and Dallas Mihaere (Dannevirke) fourth.

The 52nd Golden Shears start in Masterton on Wednesday and end on Saturday, incorporating the 15th World Championships, in which there are six titles at stake, the individual and teams honours in machine shearing, woolhandling and blade shearing.



Neil Perry, from Greytown, returns to the Golden Shears after an absence of 24 years, for which he has based in Norway, which he now represents in the World Championships. Pictured before his heat at Pahiatua.

World champs hopefuls on the road for busy week - February 24, 2012

More than 100 overseas shearers and woolhandlers are expected to compete in at least one event each in a hectic weekend heading into the Golden Shears and World Championships which start in Masterton on Wednesday.

But many will take part in all three in a triple-header which starts today with the Taumarunui Jamboree Shears in the King Country.

Effectively a travelling roadshow, the buildup will gather momentum through the Apiti Sports Shears in Northern Manawatu tomorrow, and on Sunday the separate Pahiatua Shears and the Pre-Shears Woolhandling Championships about 30km away at Massey University's Riversdale Farm.

Competitors will include many members of the teams from 25 countries which will compete in the World Championships, and for whom there will be little rest as they take part in training days on farms near Masterton on Monday and Tuesday.

Competitors will also include dozens of other overseas shearers and woolhandlers, some making an annual pilgrimage to Golden Shears and others realising a dream by competing at the World's greatest shearing sports carnival for the first time.

The four day Golden Shears will include six World championships events in machine shearing, woolhandling and blade shearing, along with more than 20 other events held each year at the Shears.

Kiwis odds-on to shear World title - again2008 - February 21, 2012

New Zealand is taking on the World next week, and will almost certainly win.

That's the view of the TAB in its opening book on the World shearing and woolhandling championships in Masterton.

In head-to-head New Zealand v The World betting on the machine shearing teams event, Kiwi shearers Cam Ferguson and John Kirkpatrick are rated \$1.05 hot favourites to give New Zealand a third consecutive win when the final is shorn on the last day of the Golden Shears, which run from February 29-March 3.

The World (any other country) is quoted at \$8.

Sports bookmaker Kieran McAnulty said a separate book will also be opened with odd on each country.

Both of the Kiwis have won teams titles, Kirkpatrick scoring in Norway in 2008 with teammate Paul Avery, and Ferguson with shearing great David Fagan in Wales in 2010.

There is history of an upset in the teams event on a New Zealand shearing board. In 1996, also in Masterton, Fagan and teammate Colin King would have won the title but for disqualification which opened the door to victory for Scottish shearers Tom Wilson and Geordie Bayne.

Six titles in machine shearing, blade shearing and woolhandling will be contest during the championships, with the TAB planning pools on most, as well as the Golden Shears features, including the famed Open shearing final.

World shears team chosen - February 20, 2012

Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson has blasted through the pain barrier to win the right to defend his World title, despite a back injury and without a single show win in the New Zealand summer.

His goal was achieved at the Southern Shears in Gore on Saturday night, when he was runner-up to Napier gun John Kirkpatrick in the final of a selection series which started three months ago in Christchurch.

He wined a couple of times on his way to finishing the gruelling 20-sheep stoush first in 19min 6.55sec, but soon afterwards made an early exit from the Shears' Open final, after only eight of the 20 sheep in that event.

Finishing the selection series final less than four seconds after Ferguson, Kirkpatrick claimed the victory with the better quality points, the pair making it an all-Hawke's Bay machines section in Shearing Sports New Zealand's team for the championships during the Golden Shears in Masterton on February 29-March 3.

Shearing four coarse-wooled corriedales, six full-wool ewes and 10 second-shear sheep, it was possibly the longest competition shear of either man's career.

Hawke's Bay-based Northland shearer Rowland Smith was a further 1.813pts away in third place, and named as reserve shearer.

Ferguson won individual and teams titles at the 2010 championships in Wales, while reigning Golden Shears champion Kirkpatrick claimed a teams title two years earlier in Norway, where he was runner-up to teammate Paul Avery in the individual final.

Also selected on Saturday were woolhandlers Joanne Kumeroa, of Whanganui, and Joel Henare, of Gisborne, first and second in another selection series which started at the Golden Shears last year.

Kumeroa has won two individual World title and two teams titles, and Henare, aged 20, becomes the youngest New Zealander to compete at the championships which were first held as a shearing-only event in 1977.

Canterbury blades shearers Mike McConnell, of Albury, and Brian Thomson, of West Melton, were named in the squad after finishing first and second in their selection series which ended in Reefton a fortnight ago.



Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, at the Southern Shears in Gore on Saturday, shearing his way into the New Zealand team and the defence of his World title in Masterton in two weeks' time.



Gisborne woolhandler Joel Henare awaits his team selection final in Gore on Saturday, before becoming the youngest person chosen to represent New Zealand in a World shearing and woolhandling championships.

The big surprise of the day was the machine-shearing semi-final elimination of King Country icon David Fagan, who was the top qualifier after the earlier points rounds and who had been hoping to add to his tally of five individual World titles and seven teams titles, dating back to 1986.

The TAB confirmed today there had been two \$10,000 bets on Fagan to win a place in the team, and a surprising level of punter interest which spokesman Kieran McNulty said indicated the World Championships and the Golden Shears would attract a record betting focus for shearing sports..

The others in the final were South Island hopes Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, and Jason Win, and Fagan's nephew, James, while the only woolhandling series finalist to miss-out was Keryn Herbert, of e Awamutu.

Napier shearer and 2006 Golden Shears champion Dion King derived some compensation for also missing out on a place in the final by winning the Southern Shears Open final for a second time and his first South Island Shearer of the Year final.

It was a particularly big night for Kirkpatrick and Smith, who shone in all three finals.

The Southern Shears senior title was won by Wi Poutu Ngarangione, of Gisborne, with Tysson Hema, of Waipukurau the runner-up. The intermediate title was won by Linton Palmer, of Dipton, with Isle of Man shearer Daniel Creer second, and the junior final went to Andrew Leith, of Dipton, 1.66pts ahead of runner-up and Christchurch university student Ethan Pankhurst, from Masterton.

Henare on Friday successfully defended the Southern Shears open woolhandling title, with the senior title going to Cushla Abraham, of Masterton, and the junior final won by Cherie Peterson, of Milton.

The South Island won the inter-island shearing and woolhandling teams challenge.

The World championships have attracted entries from 25 countries, including New Zealand-based shearers and woolhandlers representing Niue and the Cook Islands.

Fagan a fair bet for World Shears - February 15, 2012

The TAB has made King Country shearer David Fagan a warm favourite to represent New Zealand in a 10th World Championships, spanning 26 years.

The bookies have Fagan at \$1.60 to finish either first or second in a selection series final at the Southern Shears in Gore on Saturday.

If he's successful, he'll head to the championships at the Golden Shears in Masterton at the age of 50 and aiming to win his 13th and 14th World titles, easily the best record in the history of the Championships which were first held in England in 1977.

Having made his championships debut in 1986, when they were run as a side-attraction to the America's Cup yachting regatta, he has been the individual champion five times, most recently in Edinburgh nine years ago, and at the last championships in Wales in 2010 he won his seventh teams title.

He was made favourite after heading 12 selection final qualifiers on points from seven earlier rounds. Most favoured to be his teammate are pre-series favourite John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, youngest finalist, reigning New Zealand Open champion and Hawke's Bay-based Northlander Rowland Smith, and the big hope from the south, Invercargill's Nathan Stratford.

Defending World individual champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, is tentatively quoted at \$10.

Henare shuts 'em nout again at Balclutha for win No 5 - February 12, 2012

Woolhandling prodigy Joel Henare again showed his determination to become New Zealand's first male representative in his sport's World championship in 16 years when he won a fifth consecutive Woolhandler of the Year title on Saturday.

Henare has been unbeatable in the big final at the Otago Shearing and Woolhandling Championships in Balclutha since first winning the title in 2008, at the age of 16.

The latest triumph is the most important as the penultimate round in a series to find New Zealand's two woolhandlers for the World championships during the Golden Shears in Masterton on February 29-March 3.

In three of the victories he has beaten mentor, former World champion and Australia-based Whanganui woolhandler Joanne Kumeroa, who on Saturday had to settle for second-place.

But she won the South Island Circuit final, and also maintains her lead in the Shearing Sports New Zealand selection series which ends next weekend in Gore, where competitors have one last chance for points in the heats before a top six shootout chasing the two places in the team.

It was Henare's second win in a row in the series and moved him into second place, overtaking 2010 World teams champions Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, both of whom were eliminated in the heats at Balclutha where there was a big entry of 36 competitors.

Melanie Hillis, of Mataura, won the Senior final, and was third to Gisborne's Keri Henare in the South Island circuit final, while the Junior finals went to Foonie Waihape, of Gisborne (Woolhandler of the Year) and Anne-Matie Kahukura, of Omakau (Junior circuit).

That man Fagan: Will it be World Champs No 10? - February 12, 2012

Kiwi shearing legend David Fagan has become a warm favourite to represent New Zealand at a 10th World championships by heading Shearing Sports New Zealand's selection series with only a semi-final and final to go next weekend.

The 50-year-old Fagan, winner of five individual World titles and seven teams titles since first wearing the black singlet at a World championships in Perth in 1986, claimed top ranking after finishing second in the final points round, the Otago championships, in Balclutha on Saturday.

Fagan did not win any of the seven rounds, but four second placings and a third in the five rounds in the New Year were enough to dislodge Southland hope Nathan Stratford who had topped the table since the series' opening round in Christchurch in November.

The top 12 now head for a shear-off at the Southern Shears in Gore next weekend, the first two based on performances on the day making-up the machine shearing section of the team for the championships being held during the Golden Shears in Masterton on February 29-March 3.

They are The top 12 qualifiers in order are: David Fagan (Te Kuiti), Nathan Stratford (Invercargill), John Kirkpatrick (Napier), Rowland Smith (Ruawai), Dion King (Napier), Matthew Smith (Ruawai), Cam Ferguson (Waipawa), Darin Forde Orepuki), Adam Brausch (Dannevirke), Jason Win (Reefton), Tony Coster (Rakaia) and James Fagan (Te Kuiti).

Smith, 25, reaffirmed his strong claims to the second berth by winning the 20-sheep Otago final, despite being last to finish. He completed a cleansweep of the last three events in the qualifying series, having won also at Taihape and Marton.

Whanganui shearer Jerome McCrea was third, but just missed out on a late place in the top 12, when a tie for the last place was broken by placings in the compulsory first round.

Pre-series favourite and Golden Shears Open champion Kirkpatrick was fourth, and fellow Napier shearer King fifth, both also keeping in strong contention for selection.

Kirkpatrick was first finished in 17min 4.13sec, 20 seconds ahead of King, but both were let down in the quality stakes. It was a close call for the minor money with just 0.14pts separating McCrea, Kirkpatrick and King.

Reigning World champion Ferguson skipped the Otago championships, in which he was runner-up last year, but still qualified for the series' finals.

Meanwhile, Brett Roberts, of Matura, won the senior final by almost three points from runner-up Shaun Matheson, of Riverton, Hayden Tapp, of Taihape, had another success in the south by claiming the Intermediate title by just 0.065pts from Linton Palmer, of Dipton, and Wairarapa shearer Ethan Pankhurst continued good souther form by taking the Junior title..

A feature was the junior entry of 32 shearers, well up on the 18 who took part last year.

World championships qualifying - February 10, 2012

New Zealand's top shearers and woolhandlers are descending on the South Otago town of Balclutha for the Otago championships, a long-standing premier event which this year doubles as a crucial round in the selection of the national team for next month's the World Championships in Masterton in three weeks' time.

It's the last of seven points rounds for the machine shearers, with a top 12 all-but decided for a showdown at the Southern Shears in Gore on February 18 to decide who will defend the titles won by Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson and Te Kuiti icon David Fagan in Wales in 2010.

Both are well in the hunt, Fagan at the age of 50 on the cusp of being selected for a 10th World championships and the chance of a sixth individual title, and seventh teams title.

The top 12 heading into the weekend are headed by Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, followed by series favourite John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, Fagan, Napier's Dion King, Hawke's Bay-based Northlander Rowland Smith, Ferguson, Smith's brother Matt, Darin Forde, of Orepuki, Adam Brausch, of Dannevirke, Jason Win, from the West Coast, Rakaia multi-breeds exponent Tony Coster, and James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, with a six-point buffer to No 13 Angus Moore, from Ward, in Marlborough.

Previous World champions Joanne Kumeroa (Whanganui), Keryn Herbert (Te Awamutu) and Sheree Alabaster (Taihape), seem assured of woolhandling selection finals positions, along with Gisborne's Joel Henare, but the remaining two berths are a battle among at least five competitors - Huia Whyte-Puna (Christchurch), Ronnie Goss (Kimbolton), Bernadette Forde (Tuatapere), Ratapu Paikea (Papakura), and Tia Potae (Milton) - separated by just four points.



Te Kuiti shearer David Fagan, now 50 and chasing a place at a record 10th World Championships, and the chance of sixth individual title. He was pictured finishing runner-up to Rowland Smith in the North Island championships at Marton on February 4.

The first two in each of the series finals in Gore will complete selection of the team for the World event, at the Golden Shears in Masterton from February 29-March 3, joining blades shearers Mike McConnell, of Albury, and Brian Thomson, of West Melton, confirmed after their qualifying series ended in Reefton last Saturday.

The Otago championships start just after midday tomorrow (Friday) with progressing from junior shearing and wolohandling events to the glamour Open class events late on Saturday.



South Island shearing hope Nathan Stratford, leader of the World Championships New Zealand team selection series going into the last round at Balclutha on February 11.



New Zealand Open shearing champion Rowland Smith, who won the Taihape and Marton legs of the World Championships New Zealand team selection series, and is a leading contender for the series final in Gore on February 18.

Mudge still cuts it with the best - February 08, 2012

Veteran English blades shearer George Mudge is heading back to Masterton to have another crack at the World championships - his ninth since first representing his country at the championships as a machine shearer, in Masterton 31 years ago.

For now he equals the championships record of David Fagan, who'll be gunning for a 10th New Zealand World Champs spot over the next fortnight.

"He's won five or six...That's the bloody difference," said Mudge as he rested in Marton where he caught up with old friends during the Rangitikei Sports Shears.

At 64 he's also not quite the oldest in the Champs, an honour which goes to USA blade shearer Kevin Ford.



English blades shearer George Mudge, who will be the second-to-oldest competitor in the World championships in Masterton on Feb 29-Mar 3. Pictured at Marton on Feb 4.

Mudge arrived in New Zealand on January 31, managed 70 sheep with the handpiece as he made his way south, and arrived in Marton with a damaged in his arm, and probably likely to meet more old mates than sheep before taking to the board in Masterton.

Mudge is a gear supplier in Tavistock, Devon, and is without his 2008 and 2010 championships blade shearing teammate, son Andrew, kept from the competitive arena this year by family and business commitments.

Great Scot - it's Mitchell and Wilson - February 08, 2012

Globetrotting shearer Hamish Mitchell claimed his first Open-class final in New Zealand after 18 years of trying, by heading a Scottish one-two with Tectra instructor and former World champion Tommy Wilson in the Reefton show final on Saturday.

The 41-year-old Norway-based gun from Lochearnhead swept almost all before him in the UK last year with six wins from seven outings, but in three other shows in his first week back down under failed to reach any of the finals.

This time he won by seven points from Wilson, heading home local veteran and event organiser Sam Win and Marlborough shearer Richard Sampey..

Just four weeks out from the World Championships at the Golden Shears in Masterton, it was an important show of Scots strength on a day in which New Zealand-based Scotland team-mate Gavin Mutch, from Huntly, Aberdeenshire, reached the final of the North Island Championships at Marton.

Mitchell was first finished the 16 sheep, in 14min 9.81sec, almost half-a-minute ahead of next-man-off Win.

Mitchell had shorn in New Zealand in almost every season of his career until three years ago, but had to search the memory for competitive high-points, the 1994 Kaikoura senior title, and twice reaching the Golden shears Open semi-finals in Masterton.

He had failed to reach the finals of three other shows in his first week since returning to New Zealand but said he was fit and needing the competition fitness to challenge the world's best in New Zealand.

He will compete in the Otago Championships this week and the Southern Shears a week later before returning to the North Island for the top shows before the Golden Shears.

"Hopefully we can keep close to the Kiwi boys," he said, though noting the consistency of five-times World champion David Fagan who at the age of 50 remains a top-three placegetter almost every time he lines up.

World championships qualifying - Blades men score for first two places in Worlds team - February 8, 2012

Canterbury blades shearers Mike McConnell and Brian Thomson have claimed the first two positions in Shearing Sports New Zealand's team for the 15th Golden Shears World Championships.

McConnell, based at Albury, and Thomson, at West Melton, the pair's selection was confirmed at Reefton on Saturday after the final leg of their selection series.

It will be the first World Championships for series and Reefton final winner McConnell, while Thomson will be looking to do even better than his meritorious third placing in the 2010 World Championships final in Wales.

The machine shearing and woolhandling selection series' are down to the business end with the final points rounds at the Otago championships in Balclutha this week, with the top 12 shearers and the top six woolhandlers qualifying for series finals at the Southern Shears in Gore on February 17-18.



World championships blades shearing representatives Brian Thomson (centre) and Mike McConnell (right) on the Reefton stage with team manager Hugh McCarroll.

Of the current top 12 shearers, six are based in Hawke's Bay, including Northland brothers Rowland and Matt Smith.

The top 12 shearers after the sixth round at Marton were Nathan Stratford (Invercargill), John Kirkpatrick (Napier), David Fagan (Te Kuiti), Dion King (Napier), Rowland Smith (Ruawai), Cam Ferguson (Waipawa), Matt Smith (Ruawai), Darin Forde (Orepuki), Adam Brausch (Dannevirke), Jason Win (Ikamatua), Tony Coster (Rakaia) and James Fagan (Te Kuiti), with a six-point gap to 13th man Angus Moore (Ward).

Maximum points in the six rounds have been shared by four of the shearers, Stratford claiming the 12 in Christchurch as runner-up to Australian Shannon Warnest, Kirkpatrick winning at Waipukurau the next day, King claiming a double at Lumsden and Winton, and Rowland Smith pairing Taihape and Marton.

Previous World champions Joanne Kumeroa (Whanganui), Keryn Herbert (Te Awamutu) and Sheree Alabaster (Taihape), seem assured of woolhandling selection finals positions, but the remaining two berths are a battle among at least five competitors - Huia Whyte-Puna (Christchurch), Ronnie Goss (Kimbolton), Bernadette Forde (Tuatapere), Ratapu Paikea (Papakura), and Tia Potae (Milton).

The first two in each of the series finals in Gore will complete selection of the team for the World event, at the Golden Shears in Masterton from February 29-March 3.