

Weekend Shears - February 22, 2009

The pride of the east has again dumped the pride of the south, and the north, and the west, with Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick and Gisborne woolhandler Joel Henare winning the major titles at the Southern Shears in Gore.

They took the open shearing and woolhandling titles respectively, repeating the victories each had scored at the Otago Shears in Balclutha a week earlier. Kirkpatrick also won the South Island Shearer of the Year final, repeating a double he claimed in Gore a year ago.

While veteran David Fagan was first off the board in the 20-sheep Southern Shears final, Kirkpatrick's better quality was enough to claim the win, with World champion Pauk Avery, of Toko, near Stratford, and Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, also overtaking Fagan on points to finish second and third respectively.

Runner-up to Henare was Te Kuiti woolhandler Lisa Fagan, wife of David Fagan's nephew. Kirkpatrick has won 12 finals this season, and will be looking for more at Taumarunui on Friday, Apiti on Saturday and Pahiatua on Sunday, before defending his Golden Shears title in Masterton on March 5-7.

Master teen closes in on woolhandling acclaim - February 16, 2009

Gisborne teenager Joel Henare took another step towards attaining master woolhandler status before the age of 20 when he won both the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year and South Island Circuit finals at the Otago Shears in Balclutha on Saturday (February 14).

Aged 17, Henare was successfully defending the Woolhandler of the Year title he first won at Balclutha last year, and the two victories took him closer to the five "major" wins he needs to achieving a third criteria in pursuit of becoming easily the youngest competitor to be accorded the status...

It also took him two steps closer to the 15 open titles needed to be considered for inclusion on Shearing Sports New Zealand's Master Woolhandler list, now numbering 20 recognised since 1991.

Henare, who at 15 years old became the youngest person to win an open-class title, has already won the one finewool show title needed to be considered for Master status, and has already achieved North Island, and New Zealand, representation.

The senior Woolhandler of the Year final on Saturday was a triumph not only for winner Candy Hiri but also third placegetter Larnie Rimene (Morrell), recovering from serious injuries received in a van crash which killed two colleagues on the way to work in Central Otago in September. Her sister, Pagan, who was also seriously injured in the crash, competed in the open heats but did not qualify for the final. Larnie won the Golden Shears junior title two years ago, and Pagan the senior title a year earlier.

Kirkpatrick Breaks Century - February 15, 2009

Hawke's Bay shearing machine John Kirkpatrick reached another milestone last night when he claimed his 100th open class title by winning the Otago championship for the fourth time in five years.

In the final in Balclutha, the 38-year-old Napier father-of-three from Napier had champions and past masters to beat, but for the 10th time this season still came out on top. The 2006 winner and fellow Napier shearer, Dion King, was second, and Te Kuiti icon David Fagan, now 47, was third in his bid to win the title for an 18th time since he won at Balclutha in 1983, the first open-class victory in a career tally of 589.

Kirkpatrick has won nine finals in succession in seven trips to the South Island in the last 13 months, and will return next week in a bid to repeat last year's double of wins in the Southern Shears Open and South Island Shearer of the Year finals in Gore. Last year's Otago and Gore titles were part of a cleansweep of six major titles in February and March, continuing with his second Golden Shears Open in Masterton and a New Zealand

Championships and North Island Shearer of the Year double in Te Kuiti.

Coincidentally, last night's win came as son Daniel Kirkpatrick was starting-out in the Super 14 rugby big-time, scoring Wellington's first try and kicking two conversions in the Hurricanes' loss to the Waratahs in Wellington.

Meanwhile, another King Country gun, Te Kuiti veteran and competition showman Digger Balme, made a surprise return to winning form by beating World champion Paul Avery in a final at remote Ohura, between New Plymouth and Te Kuiti.

Balme, who had not won an open final in the last two seasons, beat Avery off the board by four seconds and ultimately claimed victory by 0.7pts.

Kirkpatrick the fastest gun in the west - February 09, 2009

Champion Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick proved his class in commanding fashion when he won the Reefton A and P Show open title in a flying visit to the West Coast on Saturday.

Recording his ninth win of the season and the 99th of a 15-season open class career, Kirkpatrick was both the fastest and the cleanest in the four-man final, and beat runner-up and 2008 winner Jason Win, of Rolleston, by more than three points.

Kirkpatrick ripped through his 16 sheep in 12 minutes 42 seconds, beating the leading chaser, Southland shearer Troy Shirley, by 35 seconds, with Win a further four seconds back, followed closely by Central Hawke's Bay gun Cam Ferguson, tailing the field in 13min 23sec.

Converted to points, the time and his superior board and pen points gave Kirkpatrick a total of 47.725, and Win, with the next-best quality points, finished with 50.863.

Needing only to compete to meet a six-show entry requirement to be eligible for the South Island Shearer of the Year in Gore in 12 days time, Kirkpatrick was second-to-top qualifier in the heats which had a big entry of 24 shearers, headed by Win.

Kirkpatrick was also second-to-top qualifier in the semi-finals, beaten by Shirley as the southern men raised the ultimately forlorn hope of beating the current Golden Shears and New Zealand open champion..

The field also included former World champion Scottish team member Geordie Bayne, Christchurch-based Tectra shearing instructor Gavin Rowland, who managed the New Zealand team at the World Championships in Norway in October when Kirkpatrick paired with Taranaki shearer and farmer Paul Avery to win the teams title, and New Zealand transtasman series team manager Roger Simpson, of Wakefield .

The show had a special international flavour with Kirkpatrick and Win comprising a New Zealand selection which beat the best of the overseas contingent, Scottish shearers Bayne and Una Cameron, in a teams event.

But it didn't stop there, with two of the other three show titles heading abroad, Norwegian shearer Asmund Kringeland winning the senior final by more than three points from the runner-up Kerry Irvine, of Tapawera, and the junior final being won by Rowan Forrest, of Scotland, with a comfortable margin of almost four-points to the runner-up.

Ashburton shearer Shane Hackett won the intermediate final, with a similarly comfortable margin over runner-up Teresa Hall, originally from Martinborough and partner of open finalist Ferguson.

Age no baa to shear champ Fagan - February 07, 2009

It was a case of old champs for new as shearing icon David Fagan won the open final at the Rangitikei Sports in Marton yesterday (February 7).

The 47-year-old five-times individual World champion's had to beat current champion Paul Avery, in what was Fagan's first win of the season - meaning the Te Kuiti shearer has now won at least one open competition title a season for 27 years in a row.

Avery, who had to wait 10 years after finishing second to Fagan in the 1998 World championships in Ireland before finally claiming the crown in Norway four months ago, was also beaten yesterday by Scotsman and fellow Taranaki farmer Gavin Mutch, and had to settle for third place. In another blast from a King Country-dominated past, three other Te Kuiti shearers filled the remaining spots in the six-man final, with best-job shearer Dean Ball finishing fourth overall, followed by Digger Balme, and Fagan's nephew, James.

Balme defied age and the heat to win the race, finishing 20 sheep in 16 minutes 36 seconds, with six seconds back to Mutch and a further four to the eventual winner, who pulled back the margin with better quality points.

Ball, who paired with Fagan to win the 2003 World teams title in Scotland, also tasted victory over the weekend, winning the open final at the Aria Sports on Waitangi Day, when Avery nudged ahead of Mutch in the battle for second and third. The events took place in the absence of Napier gun John Kirkpatrick, who made his third successful flying visit to the South Island this season to win at the Reefton Show. Competing mainly to meet a South Island Shearer of the Year final eligibility requirement, to contest at least six shows on the circuit, Kirkpatrick claimed his ninth win of the season, and the 99th of his career.

He heads back to the South Island later in the week, aiming to bring up his century with a successful defence of a title in the first of the traditional majors, the Otago championships in Balclutha.

Fagan, who last won the Marton title six years ago, also reached the Aria final at the weekend, but was unsure if he would compete in Balclutha, where he won his first major open title in 1983.

He reckoned, with a laugh, he wasn't going to get "too excited" about his return to winning form, ominously just four weeks out from shearing's glamour event, Masterton's Golden Shears, which he won 15 times from 1986 to 2004, and where he last year won his ninth national all-breeds series final.

He will travel south on February 19 as a member of a three-man team for an inter-island test at the second of the majors, the Southern Shears in Gore. Meanwhile, another Fagan was on the leaderboard at Marton, with James Fagan's wife, Lisa, winning the open woolhandling final, in which Taihape schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster her best result since winning the World woolhandling title in Norway and finished second, and teenaged New Zealand transtasman series team member Joel Henare, of Gisborne, third.

There was more King Country success in the senior shearing final in Marton, won by Mark Grainger, also of Te Kuiti, with Kirkpatrick's nephew, Ian Kirkpatrick, of Gisborne, finishing second.

Boast to Coast as shear champs head south, and west - February 06, 2009

One of New Zealand's more remote shearing competitions will have an unusual moment in the sun as World teams champions from two different countries compete at Reefton tomorrow (february 7).

The two are Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, who in October won a World title in Norway with Shear Blacks teammate and Taranaki gun Paul Avery, and veteran Scotsman George Bayne (crrct), who in 1996 featured in a major upset as he and fellow-countryman Tom Wilson beat hot-favourite Kiwis and home team David Fagan and Alan McDonald in a World final in Masterton.

Another surprise competitor in Westland's only inland town will be one of the World's few female open-class shearers, Una Cameron, also from Scotland and travelling with Bayne from a current based with Pahiatua contractor Motu Tua.

Kirkpatrick is making the trip in the morning, to complete a South Island Shearer of the Year requirement of six competitions to be eligible to contest the final in Gore in two weeks' time, to defend the title he won last year.

Despite having never shorn in Westland, he will be hot favourite to win on the one-day trip, having won three other finals in the South Island in just three attempts earlier in the season, among a season's haul of eight victories to date, and a career tally of 98 open-class wins. After returning home for a week's work in the sheds of Hawke's Bay, Kirkpatrick will return to the South Island on Friday for the Otago Shears in Balclutha, the first event in a bid to repeat a cleansweep of six major titles he won in February and March last year, when he won the Otago title, a Southern Shears and Southland Shearer of the Year double in Gore a week later, and the Golden Shears open in Masterton, and a New Zealand Open-North Island Shearer of the Year finals double in Te Kuiti in March.

Bayne and Cameron make the trip at the invitation of organising convenor Sam Win, while all three were in Norway watching the World championships.

Kirkpatrick will be one member of a New Zealand selection for a shearing match against an International selection as part of the Reefton show, one of 66 on the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar. Others in the unofficial test will come from top competitors during the day, such as Bayne, Cameron and Win, and reigning Reefton champion Jason Win if he competes. A further attraction will be a shearing and chopping match, a race between the Reefton A and P Show's fastest shearers and fastest axemen.

Kirkpatrick missed today's Aria Sports in the King Country because of a wedding in Napier, and his absence in the South Island means he will also miss tomorrow's Rangitikei Shearing Sports in Marton, which also feature a top-class woolhandling competition.