

Shears race hots up as World champ takes weekend double - January 25, 2009

World champion and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery's attempts to retain the mantle as New Zealand's best shearer added more spice to a season already filled with action today when he added the Agrodome Shears title in Rotorua to the Taihape A and P title he won 24 hours earlier.

On both occasions he beat Napier gun John Kirkpatrick who had a cleansweep of six major titles in New Zealand last summer, only to be nudged out of the biggest honour by Avery when they finished first and second in the World Championships final in Norway.

Kirkpatrick had won their last meeting a week earlier in Levin.

Today's final, during the 100th Rotorua A and P Show, was no less in quality than the World event, with Avery, Kirkpatrick and Taranaki-based Scotsman and World Championships finalist Gavin Mutch in the top five battling over 20 ewes, with five times World individual champion David Fagan, and former World teams champion Dean Ball, both from Te Kuiti.

Avery, making a calculated marginally-early handpiece change mid-race, and dominated the contest for time honours, at one stage having a full sheep over everyone apart from Mutch. He completed the pen in a quick 15 minutes 18.4 seconds, heading Mutch off the board by 14 seconds, with Kirkpatrick next, followed by Fagan and then Ball.

Although Avery had some concerns about his quality, the order remained the same after all points were calculated, Avery claiming the win with 56.72pts, with Mutch just sealing second with 57.9pts to Kirkpatrick's 57.975pts.

Ironically, despite his concerns about the final, Avery won a Heiniger handpiece for his efforts earlier in the day in the heats, where he scored the best quality job of any competitor in any of the four grades.

"I heard there was a handpiece up for grabs," he reckoned, highlighting that after wins in almost every show possible - a career tally of more than 170 - the tool of the trade still holds as much appeal any on the prize list.

It was his first final of 20 ewes this season, and it was a hot day, and Avery said before driving back to his farm at Toko, near Stratford: "The tongue was touching the ground by the end."

The senior title was won by Kirkpatrick's nephew, Gisborne-based Ian Kirkpatrick, the intermediate was won by consistent FarNorth teenager Tipene Te Whata, and the junior title was won by Wi Ngarangione, also of Gisborne.

There was another success for Gisborne during the weekend with teenager and New Zealand woolhandling team member Joel Henare winning the open woolhandling title at Taihape.

The weekend's only South Island competition, at Tapawera, south of Nelson, ended with an open win to Sam Win, of Ikamatua, a timely triumph leading into the next show on the Top of the South Circuit, in Reefton on February 7. He is the convenor of the organising committee.

Avery, Mutch and Kirkpatrick all expect to be at the next competition on the 66-show Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar, at Dannevirke this Friday, the two Kiwis locked in battle for favouritism leading into the glamour event, the 49th Golden Shears in Masterton on March 5-7.

Kiwis to get their shear in test series - January 23, 2009

The first of at least eight shearing internationals in the last three months of the Shearing Sports New Zealand season will take place when a Scottish development team competes against the best of the locals at the Taihape Show on Saturday.

Competing will be the Scottish development team of open class shearer Jordan Smeaton and senior Grant Lundie, shearing-off against a New Zealand selection chosen from the best in the heats of the Taihape Show.

The Scots, especially funded for their New Zealand trip by a trust to develop shearers and shearing in Scotland, will compete in similar internationals at the Aria Sports in King Country on Waitangi Day, and the Northern Shears at the Easter Show in Auckland.

New Zealand's World Champion team of Taranaki farmer Paul Avery and Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, who scored a 3-0 whitewash of Wales in the Northern Hemisphere last year face a three-match return series in the first official Welsh-team visit to New Zealand apart from two World

Championships, with tests at the Golden Shears in Masterton on March 5-7, the Kumeu Summer Shears on March 14-15 and the Taranaki Shears in Stratford on March 22.

Avery and Kirkpatrick will warm-up with a match against the New Zealand Development team of Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson and Andy Mainland, of Invercargill, at the Southern Shears in Gore on February 21 before the tests against Nicky Beynon and Gareth Wyn Daniell, who carried the Welsh singlets to third behind New Zealand and England in the World championships in Norway in October.

Kirkpatrick will also team with Southlander Nathan Stratford and New Zealand Merino champion James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, at the Golden Shears in the second leg of an annual home-and-away Trans Tasman series against Australia, intent on reversing the result of the last test at Hay in the New South Wales outback in November. They will face Australian World championship team members Shannon Warnest and Jason Wingfield and series newcomer Damian Boyle.

New Zealand will also be trying to score a fifth consecutive trans tasman woolhandling series win in Masterton, with Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and teenager Joel Henare, of Gisborne, up against Australians Rachel Hutchinson and Angela Wakeling, both from New South Wales.

The Taihape show, expected to provide a big welcome for home town hero and new World woolhandling champion Sheree Alabaster, is one of two competition on Saturday as the the Shearing Sports New Zealand season builds up to its major events in February, March and April. The other is at Tapawera, south of Nelson, the third of eight shows in this year's Top of the South series.

A third competition this weekend will be the Agrodome Shears in Rotorua, featuring a blade-shearing exhibition by World championships finalist Peter Race, who with fellow Timaru veteran Bill Michell won for New Zealand third place in the World teams blade shearing final in Norway.

Amazing treble for shear champ Kirkpatrick - January 18, 2009

Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick has brought-off his second successful inter-island raid of the season by winning two competitions in the Southland and one in Levin within three days. Kirkpatrick flew to Invercargill on Friday morning, headed for Lumsden where later in the day he won the Northern Southland Community Shears open for the third time in a row.

He then headed for Winton where on yesterday (Jan 17) he won his second New Zealand Crossbred Lambs Champion, beating fellow Hawke's Bay shearer and runner-up Cam Ferguson by 1.3pts to successfully defending a title he won when the championships were last held, at Riversdale, also in Southland, six years ago, some consolation for his defeat at the hands of Taranaki gun and World champion Paul Avery, of Taranaki, in the National Lambshearing Championship final in Raglan on January 3.

But the weekend was far from over for the 38-year-old father-of-three who flew out of Invercargill today (Jan 18), flying to Palmerston North to be met by wife Raylene and driving to win Levin, where later he won the Horowhenua open title. On November 14, Kirkpatrick won the New Zealand Corriedale Championship final in front of Princess Anne at the Canterbury Show in Christchurch, and flew home to win the Central Hawke's Bay Shears open in Waipukurau the next day.

The winner of the 2002 and 2008 Golden Shears opens and also the current New Zealand open champion has now had seven wins since returning from the World championships in Norway in October, where he was runner-up to Avery in the individual final, and paired with the Stratford farmer to win the teams title for New Zealand.

Despite competing in the shadow of David Fagan for many years, before ending the King Country guns Golden Shears run of 12 wins in succession, Kirkpatrick now has an open-class career tally of 97 wins in 14 and a half seasons since being promoted after winning the Golden Shears intermediate and senior titles in 1993 and 1994 respectively.

Avery was runner-up today, 24 hours after winning the Tauranga Shears, and third was Napier shearer and 2006 Golden Shears open champion Dion King, winner of the Wairoa Shears title yesterday in his first competition since last year's New Zealand championships and a subsequent stint working in Queensland and West Australia.

Far North shearer and 2006 Golden Shears senior champion Rowland Smith was second to Avery, and beat Fagan who was third, while in Wairoa the runner-up was Taranaki-based Scotland World championships representative and finalist Gavin Mutch, with Smith's brother, Matt, finishing third. Third to Kirkpatrick and Ferguson on Saturday was surprise finalist and Canterbury-based Nelson shearer Jason Win.

The competitions were among five during the weekend as the 66-show Shearing Sports New Zealand

season stepped up the pace headed towards the Golden Shears in Masterton on March 5-7 and the New Zealand championships in Te Kuiti on April 2-4.

The fifth show, on Motueka, attracted mainly local competition and was won by Chris Jones, of Renwick. More than 200 shearers competed, many of them in at least two of the shows, delighting SSNZ officials.

A feature of the Wairoa Show was the veterans class appearance of farmer Marg Baynes who last week shored 433 lambs in eight hours in a two-stand record of 903 with daughter Ingrid. On Saturday she was second to Scotsman and former World teams champion George Bayne (crrt), and again had the pleasure of beating husband Colin both on time and for quality. Their daughter did not compete at the weekend.

Kirkpatrick Wins Again - January 17, 2009

Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick is on track for a unique weekend double in the deep south after finishing sixth final at the Northern Southland Community Shears at Long Range, near Lumsden, yesterday (Friday).

Flying south on the morning of the event, he retained the full-wooled ewes title he won last year, and today will be out to complete the double in the New Zealand Crossbred Lambs Championship at the Southland Shears in Winton, defending a title he won when the championships were last held at Riversdale, also in Southland, in 2003.

Kirkpatrick was only third off the board in yesterday's six-man final, 44 seconds behind race-winner and Southland hope Alton Devery, of Tuatapere, who stripped his 20 sheep in 17 minutes 1.25 seconds. But Kirkpatrick turned the result on quality points both for his craftsmanship on the board and the finished product in the pens outside to claim his fifth title of the season, his second in the South Island. Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, was second, with Devery pushed-back to third. New Zealand Development team member Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, put in a creditable performance to take fourth, ahead of New Zealand representative James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, with Troy Pyper, of Invercargill, finishing sixth.

Kirkpatrick, whose 15 victories last season included the Golden Shears, New Zealand and Australian crossbred titles, has won five finals this season, including two in the South Island. Competing for many years in the shadow of King Country icon David Fagan, Kirkpatrick has won 95 titles since first competing in the open class in 1995.