

Smith nails star-studded Taranaki shearing final - March 29, 2015

World shearing champion Rowland Smith is likely to have cemented favouritism to win a fourth New Zealand Open title next month by winning two finals during the weekend.

The 28-year-old Hawke's Bay-based Smith won the Waitomo Caves Sports title on Saturday and the Taranaki Shears title in Stratford today.

A week earlier he won the Waimarino Shears title in Raetihi, his first event back after a nine-month-break since returning from the UK where he won the World title in Ireland last May.

It was a unique six-man final marking the 30th Taranaki Shears, with the first four placings going to World champions - possibly the most World individual champions ever to shear in a single final.

Runner-up and local stalwart Paul Avery, now 48, won the World title in 2008, third-placegetter, new Golden Shears champion and Whangamomona farmer was World champion in 2012, and fourth place went to five-times World champion David Fagan, who plans to end a 37-year-competition shearing career at the national championships on home-town Te Kuiti on April 9-11.

Each of the quartet had previously won the Taranaki title at least once, Fagan having won 15 times between 1986 and 2003.

Mutch, the 36-year-old defending champion, and from Scotland, spreadeagled the six-man field to finish his 20 sheep in 15min 19.19sec, more than a sheep ahead of Smith who was next off.

Smith said later: "It was quite a surprise to win this one. I thought Gavin had nailed it."

Mutch knew otherwise, saying he knew his quality wasn't good enough to hold out the others, despite a time-score advantage of almost three points.

Avery, who now shears competitions only occasionally, was only fourth to finish, but also brought off a surprise victory.

A couple of struggling sheep as the shearers tore into their first few cost him dearly, he reckoned. "But for a couple of naughty ones I could have gone close."



OPEN WOOLHANDLING: The finalists at Taranaki, Sheree Alabaster claiming an important red ribbon.



WORLD CLASS FINAL: The 2008 World Champion, Paul Avery, doesn't compete a lot these days, but he went within a few shaves of winning the Open shearing final, which had three other World champions.



YOUNG GUNS: The novice shearing final had an 11 year-old winner, Reuben Alabaster, of Taihape.

He scored the best in pen-judging and ultimately was beaten by just 0.679pts.

Floyde Neil, of Taumarunui, Kaleb Foote, of Waikaretu, and Sean Gouk, of Hamilton, each completed a double for the weekend by winning the Senior, Intermediate and Junior shearing finals respectively. Each also won at the Waitomo Caves Sports on Saturday.

It was Neil's third consecutive win over Golden Shears Senior champion Ethan Pankhurst.

Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, won the Open woolhandling final, her fourth win in the event in the seven years since she won the World title in Norway in 2008, and showing she's on-song for her defence of the New Zealand Championship in two weeks' time.

Peggy-Sue Tohengaroa, of Aria, and Ngaio Hanson (nee Braddick), of Eketahuna, were second and third respectively, beating national rankings leader and 2014-2015 New Zealand trans-tasman series representative Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu.

Hanson's sisters, Ana and Marika, won the Senior and Junior woolhandling finals respectively.

About 90 competitors took part in the championships which were held on a six-stand shearing board in the Stratford War Memorial Centre. There were 63 entries in the five shearing classes and 33 in the three woolhandling classes.

Among them were 10 entries in the novice shearing, which was won by 11-year-old Reuben Alabaster, of Taihape. But he wasn't the youngest competitor - Tapa Barrowcliffe, aged 10, of Pio Pio, was 6th.

Two-from-two as Smith nails Waitomo shears - March 28, 2015

World champion Rowland Smith made it two-out-of-two in his return to competition shearing when he won the Open final at the Waitomo Caves Sports today.

Shearing in a four-man final over 20 sheep each, Hawke's Bay-based Smith was just pipped in the race for fastest time by King Country veteran David Fagan who finished 17min 32sec.

But quality points turned the table as Smith secured the win by 2.25pts. Porangahau contractor Adam Brausch was third and Axle Reid, of Taihape, put in a strong performance to reach the final and finish fourth.

Smith had the previous week returned from a competition break of more than nine months to win the Waimarino Shears final at Raetihi, and has quickly edged himself into favouritism to win a fourth New Zealand Championship Open title at Te Kuiti - Fagan's last competition after more than 30 years in Open-class competition.

Smith has won the last seven finals he's contested in New Zealand, having last been beaten, by Fagan, in last year's Kumeu show shears. He also won the World title and two other major titles in the UK last May.

Fagan was also on stage today as a shearing judge, which particularly impressed Junior winner Sean Gouk. Floyd Neil, of Taumarunui, and Kaleb Foote, of Waikaretu, won the Senior and Intermediate finals respectively, repeating the wins they had also had at Raetihi.

Shaylyn Te Huia - A young champ is mourned - March 25, 2015

(June 8, 1998 - March 23, 2015)

Former Golden Shears novice woolhandling champion Shaylyn Te Huia is on her way home for one last time for her funeral in the town where she won her title just over a year ago.

The 16-year-old Shaylyn died on Monday in Te Kuiti, and she was being taken to Masterton on Thursday for the continuation of the tangihanga at Te Rangimarie Marae, where her final service will be held on Saturday morning (March 28).

From a stalwart shearing family, she first competed at the Golden Shears as a 14-year-old in 2013, finishing sixth in the novice woolhandling heats and just missing a place in the final.



She made the big impression a year later when she won the novice woolhandling final at the North Island Championships in Marton, and the 2014 Golden Shears title four weeks later.

She was 7th in the Golden Shears junior woolhandling heats three weeks ago but was eliminated in the semi-finals.

But woolhandling was not the only string to her shearing sports bow - last year she also won two learner shearing events in Australia, where father Stacey last month set a new World record for the most merino ewes shorn in a nine-hour day.

Two uncles have won Golden Shears senior shearing titles, her dad and auntie Kerri-Jo are current holders of World strongwool records set in New Zealand, and grandparents Dean and Jo run a recently-established wool harvest training business.

Maternal grandmother Bubbles Conaghan, mother of bereaved mum Tarnz Conaghan, told the Wairarapa Times-Age Shaylyn was an "up and coming" woolhandler and it was a "really tragic, tragic loss".

"It was absolutely unexpected, I couldn't believe it when they told me," she said. "She was a very loving person, do anything for you."

Shaylyn had been working recently with Te Kuiti contractor Neil Fagan and was planning to compete in the Junior woolhandling at the New Zealand Shearing Championships which end the New Zealand competition season in the King Country town on April 7-11.

As she lay in state in Te Kuiti before the 6am Thursday departure for Masterton, family had been overwhelmed by the support from the shearing industry and sporting whanau across the globe.

"History has been changed" - Australian manager - March 10, 2015

Scotsman Gavin Mutch's Golden Shears Open win, Australia's cleansweep in the Transtasman shearing and woolhandling tests, and two other wins by competitors from the UK have pushed the Golden Shears into a new era, says Australian team manager.

In Masterton after Shannon Warnest, Damien Boyle and Daniel McIntyre had beaten New Zealand shearers Nathan Stratford, Colin O'Neill and David Buick in the final night shearing test, Mr Murray said that if there ever was any doubt that shearing was an international sport then the Golden Shears 2015 had proven it was.

"This shows that anyone can come to New Zealand and win at the Golden Shears if they put in the training and the effort," he said as the crowd milled around in the War Memorial Stadium, after an emotional last prizegiving in which Australia's Saturday night win was overshadowed by Mutch's triumph and the farewell of shearing icon David Fagan.



Transtasman giant: Australian captain Shannon Warnest, shearing in his 25th test against New Zealand. PHOTO/Pete Nikolaisen Photography

The win, Australia's 4th in a row in the annual home-and-away tests, and the 8th win in the last nine matchests, put Australia in front 29-28 in Transtasman test wins since the series started 40 years ago, in 1974-75.

It came 24 hours after Australians Sarah Moran and Tara Smith beat New Zealanders Keryn Herbert and Ronnie Goss in the woolhandling test, a series New Zealand leads 25-9 of all tests since woolhandling was introduced to the series almost 20 years ago.

The Lister Transtasman Shearing test was yet another personal success for South Australian shearing legend Shannon Warnest who was in his 25 test in the series dating back to his first at Armidale, NSW, in 2000.

It was his 15th win, the 6th in New Zealand, and it was at least the 11th time he has been the top individual, which includes at least three times while in the losing team.

Current Australian national champion Daniel McIntyre, of Glen Innes, NSW, was first to finish, shearing the six merinos, three long wool and three lambs in 17min 10.33sec, the fastest time in a Masterton test since 2011.

Warnest was next then the first New Zealander, Alexandra finewool specialist Colin "Mouse" O'Neill, next in 17min 41.777 in what was the closest transtasman race in five years, 1min 16sec covering the field compared with less than a minute in the Masterton test in 2010.

Warnest was the man when it came to quality, the best on the board by 0.66pts and by almost 7pts in the pens from the next-best, Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford, who had a busy night of third placings - in the test, as the defending PGG Wrightson National Circuit final a short while before the test and in the Golden Shears Open final at the end of the night.

Ultimately it was a crushing win for Australia, by more than 21pts.

Murray said the sheep were in great condition, and his team felt privileged to be part of a week in which "history has been changed", and the Golden Shears farewell of Kiwi legend David Fagan.

The next test will be at the Australian national championships in Forbes, a town of about 7000 people in central-west NSW, with Shearing Sports to name a new team based on the results of the Golden Shears Open, the PGG Wrightson National final, the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final at Balclutha, and the North Island woolhandling circuit final in Masterton.

Aussies get a hand from the opposition to win woolhandling test - March 9, 2015

The true international camaraderie of the shearing sports was possibly never better highlighted than in Australia's surprise win over New Zealand in Elders Primary Wool Transstasman woolhandling test at the Golden Shears in Masterton.

Four days earlier Australian team members Sarah Moran and Tara Smith were put through a training course in which one of the instructors was Keryn Herbert, who with Ronnie Goss would at the end of the week make-up the most experienced pairing New Zealand has ever put together in terms of transstasman woolhandling.

While the Australian transstasman series experience extended to just the two tests of Worldf Championships team member Moran, the Kiwis would start with 17 transstasman tests between them - Goss with nine dating back to her first in 2002, and Herbert with eight since her debut at Hay, NSW, in 2008.



Teams being introduced before the Elders Primary Wool Transstasman Woolhandling test. From left woolhandling commentator Audrey Tamanui-Nunn, and the New Zealand team of manager Ken Payne and woolhandlers Keryn Herbert and Ronnie Goss, the Australian team of Tara Smith and Sarah Moran and manager Jim Murray, and the night's M.C., Tuma Mullins.
PHOTO/Pete Nikolaison

The tutorial was obviously right on the button, for the less-favoured visitors peaked at the right moment to claim what they conceded was a "shock" win, albeit Australia's fourth in the seven tests since a New Zealand run of 12 consecutive victories came to an end at Christchurch in 2011.

Moran, 40, of Ararat, Vic, and 22-year-old international rookie Tara Smith, of Naracoorte, South Australia, thus claimed Australia's 9th win in the 34 tests since the annual home-and-away matches began in 1998.

Moran was most pleased by the performance of her teammate, who won a place in the team by finishing second to Moran in the Australian Championships at Errowanbang in November.

Moran recalled how she brought a sponsored team of seven younger competitors to the New Zealand finewool championships in Alexandra in 2012, and saw Smith have a "major meltdown."

"She just couldn't cope," said Moran. "If there was any one of them I thought wouldn't make it back it was Tara, but she has. I'm very proud of her."

Moran, who has won two Australian championships and represented her country at last year's World Championships in Ireland, said the win had fulfilled her career "expectations", although she would have liked to have reached a Golden Shears Open quarterfinal.

But it's up to Smith and other younger competitors to target the next World championships, being held in Christchurch in 2017, she said.

Smith may have momentarily thought about another meltdown as she raised the victors' trophy in the air in front of 800 spectators, and watched in horror as its lid flew off the stage.

The pair said they were confident about their job during the test in which each team handled four merino fleeces and four standard breed strongwool New Zealand fleeces.

Moran was, however, worried about the quality points being determined "out the back" by the judges before the final result was known.

The Australians pipped New Zealand by 2.33sec, in the race to the finish after each team had handled four merino and four long wool fleeces, and they scored markedly better in oddment selection and fleece wool. Herbert and Goss pegged-back just a single point in the board and throw judging as Moran and Smith won by over 100pts.

And then along came Jones - another Goldies champion from Wales - March 9, 2015

Young Welsh shearer Ash Jones celebrated a remarkable last week in New Zealand by winning the World's premier Junior shearing title.

The 23-year-old from Llangollen won the Golden Shears Junior final in Masterton on Saturday, emulating the feat of Hefin Rowlands who 12 months earlier in the same grade had Wales' first win at the World's most famous shearing and woolhandling championships in 23 years.

The lanky farm worker and former panel and paint shop apprentice had come from almost nowhere in competition terms to have his first wins just the previous weekend, but in Masterton substantiated his claims by being top qualifier when 52 junior-class shearers contested their heats on the opening day of the 55th Golden Shears on Thursday.

He was fourth qualifier for the six-person final, including two women who head New Zealand's junior rankings.

In a final over five sheep each, the pace was set by home-town shearer Tui Wilton who finished in 9min 17.036sec, Jones being next off in 9min 28.429sec.

Jones pegged-back the deficit with the better quality points and won by 0.732pts over eventual the eventual runner-up, Southland shearer Robert Hubber. Wilton had to settle for third place.



Ash Jones, from Llangollen, Wales, wins the Golden Shears Junior final in Masterton.
PHOTO/Pete Nikolaisson

He was immediately swamped by fellow Welsh shearers, who promised suitable celebration would take place before Jones flies home on Wednesday, where the party may already have started.

Jones said soon afterwards he'd rung his dad who reckoned he'd rushed home from the pub in Llangollen about 2am to watch the final via live-streaming on the internet from a stadium with about 800 spectators.

"I had a bit of a bad semi-final" he said, but with such helpers as South Island shearing instructors Chas Tohiariki and Tom Wilson helping with his gear and technique he always had the best of advice - Wilson, a Scotsman having won the World individual championship in 1994.

Jones, whose major other sports interest has been motocross racing, arrived in New Zealand in November aiming simply to improve his shearing, with no ambition other than to "maybe" reach a final at one of the many competitions around New Zealand.

Shearing first for a contractor in Napier, Hawke's Bay, he had experience in the South Island and in Taihape and the central North Island, where he started a run of finals in late January.

He is rushing home for lambing, but hopes to be back shearing later in the year to prepare for his debut in the next class in the UK.

"It would be good to just make any Intermediate final," he said.

Senior champ: Open next year, Happy to make the Top 30 - March 9, 2015

Masterton shearer Ethan Pankhurst realised a dream when he won the Golden Shears Senior shearing final in Masterton on Saturday.

But he knows it could be years before the dream - becoming an open-class shearer next season - includes anything like the success of the last five months in which he has won 12 finals.

He said in Masterton's War Memorial Stadium on Saturday he wanted to win 10 wins before going up to the glamour Open class where he knows he could be waiting several years before he starts winning again.

"I wanted to win 10, that was my goal," he said, confirming the job's not finished yet, as he prepares for the season-ending events, including the New Zealand Championships in Te Kuiti next month.

The 23-year-old is aware that even the best of Senior shearers over the years have had to serve an apprenticeship in the top grade, and he will be happy enough at Golden Shears next year just to qualify past the first round in the Open championship.

"I'd like to have a go at the Top 30 Shootout," he said.

Pankhurst, who decided to go fulltime shearing after a year at Lincoln College, is in his fourth competition season, and has already shorn 64 finals in New Zealand, winning four in the junior grade in 2011-12, including the Otago Shears in Balclutha, 10 as an intermediate the next season, including the Southern Shears in Gore, three as a senior last season, including the New Zealand Corriedale Championship in Christchurch, and now 12 this season, including the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate and again at the Southern Shears.



Ethan Pankhurst, Senior winner this year, steps up to the Open next year and will be happy just to make the Top 30.
PHOTO/Pete Nikolaisson

A Wairarapa College old boy and the son of Masterton farmer and former Golden Shears lower grades finalist BVruce Pankhurst, Pankhurst had huge support from the rest of the family, with mum Trudy up from Waikouaiti along with others from the South Island.

He was comfortably top qualifier for today's final in which he was charge throughout the 12-sheep contest, finishing in 13min 32.46sec, about 26 seconds quicker than second placegetter Cody Beck, of Taumarunui. Pankhurst, however, matched speed with skill, and also had the best quality points to win by a comfortable 4.407pts.

Pankhurst says he may pick up the studies again one day, but is enjoying shearing and the travel too much.

He's off for a third season in the UK, and has hopes of shearing in North America next year.

Third today was Bevan Pere, of Gisborne, followed by Robert Mudgway, of Taihape, first-year senior Dylan McGruddy, also of Masterton, and 2011 Golden Shears Junior champion Michael Rolston, of Levin.

Henare ponders future after third Goldies open woolhandling title - March 9, 2015

At the age of 23, Joel Henare has the potential to become the David Fagan of woolhandling, after winning a third consecutive Golden Shears Open woolhandling title on Saturday night.

But, with a 2012 World title also in his kit, along with six New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year titles, and the ultimate of Master Woolhandler status awarded by Shearing Sports New Zealand last year, he doesn't see himself winning too many more at the Golden Shears.

He has been planning to move to Australia with partner Erica Reti and boys Keanu and Hikurangi by the end of the month and while he still has one particular goal to reach in competition, and it's not the record of six Golden Shears Open woolhandling wins achieved by Joanne Kumeroa from 1995 to 2012.



Joel Henare takes in the moment after finishing his 9th consecutive Golden Shears Open woolhandling final, and his third consecutive win in the event.
PHOTO/Pete Nikolaison

Having dedicated his latest win to Kumeroa who has been battling cancer for more than two years in Australia, Henare said as he headed back to work in Southland and Central Otago the feat he would most like to achieve is winning the Golden Shears, New Zealand Championships, the New Zealand Merino championships in Alexandra, the Corriedale Championship in Christchurch and the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year titles in Balclutha in one year.

"They call it the Grand Slam," he said. "Only one person has ever won them all in one year, and that was Joanne."

Competing in his 9th consecutive Golden Shears open final starting with his first in 2007, and as defending champion and winner of seven previous finals this season, Henare justified his favouritism by qualifying in top place in the quarterfinals and semi-finals, the latter round seeing the elimination of heats top-qualifier Keryn Herbert.

He surpassed his own expectations in the final in which he dominated all aspects, and won by almost 100pts from runner-up and reigning New Zealand Open champion Sheree Alabaster, who earlier on Saturday won the North Island Circuit final.

Third place went to 2008 champion Ronnie Goss, reaching her third final in three attempts after returning to competition just eight days earlier at Taumarunui. Fourth place went to Anita Phillips.

Henare is still considering his future, and wants to get into more training of woolhandlers and assessing trainers, and it's possible he may return to Gisborne. Also possible is he may eventually go shearing.

"I have been doing some shearing, about 40 a run, not full time, sometimes five or six hours," he said. "I will do it eventually. That's the plan."

A Thistle in their side - Scotsman wins Golden Shears Open final - March 9, 2015

A Scotsman who settled in New Zealand to farm in Taranaki has become the first shearer from overseas to win the Golden Shears Open Shearing Championship.

Gavin Mutch, 35, won the title on Saturday (March 7) on the same stage in Masterton where he won the World Championships final in 2012, bringing fame both to Huntly in Aberdeenshire and New Zealand's Forgotten Highway hamlet of Whangamomona.

Wife Pip and their children watched the internet livestreaming from home in Taranaki, others were watching the history-making 55th Golden Shears Open final over breakfast about 20,000km away, among a worldwide viewing audience of several thousand, and about 1600 packed Masterton's War Memorial Stadium.



A moment in history as Gavin Mutch, right, became the first shearer from overseas to win the Golden Shears Open shearing final, and was presented with the trophy by retiring 16-times champion David Fagan. PHOTO/Pete NikolaisonNew

The win ushered in a new era of open shearers after legendary Te Kuiti shearer David Fagan was eliminated in the semi-finals, in what was to have been a bid for a 17th and final Golden Shears Open title before retiring next month.

Mutch said Fagan had stopped a lot of other great shearers from achieving the ultimate goal in World shearing, and he was glad to have won before the 53-year-old Fagan retired.

The 2010 winner, Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, was also ousted in the semi-finals, leaving a unique field comprising just one former winner, Hastings shearer Dion King, and including three newcomers - Feilding shearers Aaron Haynes and Murray Henderson and Southlander Murray Henderson.

It was the first time since 2002 that there had not been at least two former winners, and the number of first-time Golden Shears Open finalists in the six-man field was the most since there were also three newcomers in 1983.

Amazingly, the six finalists had won just four competitions between them this season, Mutch winning two of them.

After the elimination of Fagan and Ferguson, the winners of 18 finals between them this season, the pace in the final was expected to be a battle between Mutch and King, and possibly the unheralded 30-year-old Pyper, who ultimately was to emerge as a serious hope of being the first South Island shearer to win the title since 1989.

The two went into the final as joint-favourites, but the lead see-sawed mainly between King and Pyper, on stands one and two, King ultimately claiming the ascendancy to finish first in 17min 36.835sec, almost losing his last sheep over the front side of the board instead of through the porthole.

He beat Pyper by 10 seconds, Mutch by 20, and the fast-finishing surprise packet Haynes, who was next to finish in 18min 4.407sec.

Few were prepared to pick the ultimate outcome while judges calculated pen quality points, and ultimately Mutch, scoring well in quality points but still not the best, had done enough to win by just 0.596pts from Haynes, in what was a particularly close finish all-round.

Mutch's 65.174 penalty points compared with the 65.979pts of third placegetter and Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford, who achieved his best result in six Golden Shears Open finals by finishing third. He carded the best quality points.

King, the 2006 winner and in the final for a 9th time, was 4th, followed by Henderson and Pyper.

Mutch first reached the Golden Shears Open final in 2005 and tonight's was his 6th, the best previous results having been two 4th placings.

In other major events on the final night, Australia scored a fourth consecutive Transtasman shearing test win over New Zealand, and edged in front at 29-28 in the number of tests won in matches between the two countries since the Transtasman series began in 1974-75. On Friday night, Australia had also won a woolhandling test match.

Rakaia shearer Tony Coster reclaimed the honour of being New Zealand's top all-wools shearer by winning the PGG Wrightson National Circuit final, in which Mutch was 4th, while 23-year-old Joel Henare, of Gisborne, won his third consecutive Golden Shears Open woolhandling title.

The end of the night was choked with emotion, as Fagan was honoured on stage to a standing ovation marking the end of a Golden Shears career spanning 35 years.

He then presented the trophies to the new kilted champion, followed by tears of emotion as the National Anthem of Scotland was played to honour Mutch's success at a championships where of the 22 titles decided the first and the last both went to Scotland.

On Thursday Lanarkshire lassie Claire Wilson's novice Woolhandling win was Scotland's first New Zealand Golden Shears title since senior shearer Doug Lambie's win in 1990.

In other on Saturday, Masterton's Ethan Pankhurst won the senior shearing final, the intermediate final was won by 2013 Junior champion Marshall Guy, of Kaeo, and Ash Jones, of Wales, won Saturday's Junior final.

The senior woolhandling title was won by Stevie Mason-Smallman, of Taihape, and the junior woolhandling final was won by Chiquita Tamepo, who lives in Milton but is from Tikitiki, on the East Coast north of Gisborne.

On Thursday, Sarah Higgins, of Havelock, won the Novice shearing final, becoming the first person to win Golden Shears titles in both shearing and woolhandling (having won the Junior woolhandling final in 2013).

A few facts about the Golden Shears Open final...

- Dion King, who won the Open in 2006, was the only former winner in the final. Every Golden Shears final since 1963 has had at least one former winner, but the last time there was only one was in 2002 when John Kirkpatrick ended David Fagan's run of 12 consecutive wins from 1990-2001.
- Aaron Haynes, Murray Henderson and Troy Pyper had never before shorn in a Golden Shears Open final - the most newcomers since 1983, when winner Alan Donaldson, 1985 winner Paul Grainger, and eventual Golden Shears president Greg Herrick each qualified for the first time.
- The six finalists had previously had just four wins between them this season: Gavin Mutch (Taihape, Ohura), Dion King (Wairoa), and Nathan Stratford (Lumsden), and the others none. Henderson has had just one Open win, in 2000, but Haynes and Pyper are yet to win in the Open class.
- Aaron Haynes and Murray Henderson were the first Manawatu shearers in the Open final since 1977 when Kerry Johnstone reached the last of his four finals. With Troy Pyper joining Nathan Stratford in the final, it was the first time that more than one South Islander had made it since Stratford and Alton Devery qualified in 2007.
- Dion King was first to finish, in 17min 36.835sec - slower than all but one of the 2014 finalists, and the slowest for the first-man-off since 1997 when David Fagan stopped the clock at 18min 5sec. The fastest final was in 2003 when David Fagan took just 15min 27.4sec.

Sitting it out - Kirkpatrick has itchy feet at Golden Shears - March 6, 2015

Four-times Golden Shears Open shearing champion John Kirkpatrick conceded today he's getting itchy feet sitting out an injury at the 55th championships in Masterton - but it doesn't stop him lending a hand.

Napier shearer Kirkpatrick, 44, has been helping-out with the computer scoring system, while recovering from an operation on a shoulder injury which has kept him out of action since July last year.

He has otherwise shorn at the Golden Shears every year since his debut at the World's premier shearing and woolhandling competition, when he won the Intermediate final in 1993. While bracing at the bit, he's taking his time, prepared to take the advice of his specialist, and having resumed strengthening work hopes to be able to shear at the New Zealand championships in Te Kuiti next month - the last competition of shearing legend David Fagan.

Kirkpatrick says the break will do him good in the long run, as he hopes next season to be challenging for a place at the next World Championships in Christchurch in 2017.

It was Kirkpatrick who in 2002 ended the 12-year Golden Shers Open reign of Fagan who still went on to win the big event three more times, and is favourite to win a 17th and final time tomorrow, at the age of 53.

"It's his competitiveness that amazes me most," said Kirkpatrick who won the Open again in 2008, 2011 and 2012. "That's what's kept him out on top for so long."

"It's not going to be easy to beat him," he said, when asked to nominate the shearer most likely to beat Fagan, who last won in 2009 and who has failed to reach the final in the last two years.

Punters are not shying-away however. Fagan, who has won 12 finals this season, is a \$2.50 TAB favourite to win and was today the subject of a \$2000 bet.

TAB shearing bookmaker said that by 1pm, before the Open championship heats had started, that punting turnover on the Open final was already double that of last year.

Another significant bet was \$1000 on Hastings shearer and 2006 winner Dion King, resulting in his odds being cut from \$8 to \$6.

The Aussies have it - so say the punters - March 6, 2015

Aussie punters - more to the point those who bet on Australia - have caught the TAB on the hop in the buildup to Saturday night's transtasman shearing test in Masterton overwhelming backing the visitors to win a fourth test in a row.

TAB shearing bookmaker Kieran McAnulty said bets on Australia have totalled more than four times that bet on the Kiwis.

But the TAB was, today at least, unwilting in it's confidence New Zealand will regain the upper hand in a test which marks the 40th anniversary of the first formal transtasman shearing series staged in 1974-75.

The Kiwi team of Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, Colin "Mouse" O'Neill, of Alexandra, and David Buick, of Pongaroa, was still favourites, albeit with odds eased from the opening price of \$1.40 to \$1.60. Meanwhile, the odds on the test being won by Australians Shannon Warnest, Daniel McIntyre and Damian Boyle have been cut from \$2.70 to \$2.20.

There have been 56 tests since in the series, and wins are tied 28-each as a result of Australia winning the last three in Warrnambool(Vic) in 2013 and Masterton and Errowanbang(NSW) last year, and seven of the last eight test.

The shearers will each shear six finewooled merinos, and three ewes and three lambs of the strongwooled breed more common in New Zealand.

Mr McAnulty foresaw New Zealand remaining favourites, with a possible shift to the Australians close to start time.

"If the money keeps coming on the Australians, we'll have to listen" he said. A woolhandling test will be held tonight, with New Zealanders Keryn Herbert and Ronnie Goss out to beat Australians Sarah Moran and Tara Smith and defend the honour of a much more successful black-teeshirt record, New Zealand having won 25 of the 33 tests since woolhandling tests started in 1998.

TAB cuts odds on Fagan to win Golden Shears Open, on form - March 6, 2015

Betting on legendary shearer David Fagan to win one last Golden Shears Open title has seen the TAB slash his odds today just hours before he lines up with about 70 others in the iconic events heats in Masterton.

The 53-year-old Fagan started a \$3 favourite when the TAB opened a book on the final three weeks ago, and TAB sportsmaker Kieran McAnulty said the "money has started to go on now," leading to the odds being cut to \$2.50 ahead of the heats starting early-afternoon.

"I think it's fair to say when we opened-up it was with the anticipations there would be money coming on because of his last Golden Shears, but his performances since then has made him the genuine favourite on form."

Fagan has won seven consecutive finals throughout the country in the last month, including a treble at Taumarunui, Apiti and Pahiatua last Friday, Saturday and Sunday, the first time the treble had been achieved since he won all three event 18 years ago.

"We have taken a number of bets in the \$500 to \$1000 range," said Mr McAnulty.

The tightening of Fagan's odds has seen a drift in the odds of the next-most favoured, 2010 winner Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, Scottish Taranaki farmer Gavin Mutch, and Wairarapa hope David Buick, of Pongaroa, all now at \$6. The 2006 winner, Dion King, of Hastings, is now at \$8.

Mr McAnulty announced today that bets will also be taken for the first time on who will shear the fastest time in the final. Betting will open late on Saturday afternoon as soon as the six finalists are known.

The win option on the Open final, the six-man glamour event of 20 sheep each and set to start just after 9pm tomorrow (Saturday), is one of 17 options the TAB is running on the Golden Shears.

Mr McAnulty says more and more bets are being made through internet accounts, the popularity of the event being highlighted in the 40,000 views Golden Shears events had on live-streaming last year. Improved streaming is expected to attract even more views this year.

Sibling rivalry on the Golden Shears wool tables - March 5, 2015

Marion woolhandler Adrienne Samuels is wondering if she may have been teaching younger brother Jimmy just a little too much with the two heading for the ultimate in sibling rivalry on the wooltables of the Golden Shears in Masterton.

Adrienne, 33, and Jimmy, 25, were among 26 in the senior woolhandling heats on the opening day of the three-day 55th annual championships today, both qualifying for the semi-finals on Saturday.

In the meantime Jimmy Samuels, who has also turned his hand to occasional shearing and woolhandling competition commentating, also has the Open shearing heats to think about tomorrow afternoon.

Before the judges had decided the points after today's heats, he said: "She smoked me." She said: "His quality points out the back will be better."



Brother and sister Adrienne Samuels (left) and Jimmy Samuels (right), compete alongside each other in the heats of the Golden Shears senior woolhandling championships in Masterton. Both qualified for Saturday's semi-finals.

PHOTO/Pete Nikolaison, Golden Shears

The 12 semi-finalists are headed by event favourites Erana Smith, based in Hastings but from Ruatoria, and Eketahuna's Ana Braddick, while Adrienne Samuels qualified in 4th place, and the little brother in 8th.

Each of the Samuels, brother and sister of record-holding Southland shearer Leon Samuels, has had one win this season.

Adrienne won at the Geyslerland Championships at the Rotorua A and P Show on January 25, and Jimmy, having won at his first attempt when his sister coerced him to competing at woolhandling 13 months ago, won again on Wednesday at the Pre-Shears Championships at Massey's Riverside Farm at Mikimiki, just north of Masterton.

Qualifiers for the Golden Shears Senior woolhandling semi final to be held on Saturday: Erana Smith (Hastings), Ana Bradick (Eketahuna), Sarah Higgins (Havelock), Adrienne Samuels (Marion), Stevie Mason-Smallman (Taihape), Connor Puha (Kimbolton), Creedence Culshaw (Raupunga), Jimmy Samuels (Marion), Katrice Hawkins (Masterton), Kylie Laris (Masterton), Erica Reti (Balfour), Keisha Te Huki (Dannevirke).

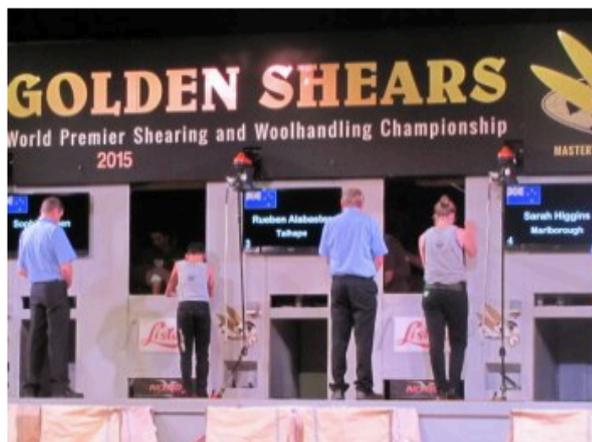
Uni graduate Higgins makes Golden Shears history - March 5, 2015

A Lincoln University graduate who took up shearing to go and see the World created a piece of shearing sports history when she won the Novice shearing final at the end of the opening day of the 55th Golden Shears in Masterton today.

Sarah Higgins, 22, from Havelock, in Marlborough, added the title to the Junior woolhandling title she won two years ago.

She is the first person to win Golden Shears titles in both shearing and woolhandling in the 31 championships since woolhandling was added to the World's greatest shearing festival's programme in 1985.

Higgins said she never thought she would "go back to the sheds" after her two years at Lincoln, which ended with a B.Com in agriculture.



The short and long of it as the youngest-ever Golden Shears finalist, 11-year-old Rueben Alabaster(left) and eventual winner Sarah Higgins(right) prepare for the Novice championships semi-finals

She's worked in the woolsheds in "Uni" holidays to help pay the bills during the year, but with some success in shearing sports competitions behind her and the scroll tucked safely in her kit, she took

woolhandling up fulltime last year, going to the UK and to Australia Woolhandling, as is so often the case, led to learning to shear.

"I saw it as a great way to see the World," she said after the win today, in an event where there was some anticipation of something perhaps even more historic at the other end of the shearing board.

On Stand 2, she shored her two sheep in 7min 28.401sec, but was only third to finish - 1min 8sec after tiny 11-year-old Rueben Alabaster, of Taihape.

The top semi-final qualifier from 40 who contested the heats, he shored on Stand 6 in the big showdown, the youngest ever to contest a Golden Shears final, and he beat them all in the race - first to finish in 6min 20.17sec.

Higgins however had the better quality, and ultimately won by almost three points from runner-up Taiawhio Wati, of Dargaville. Alabaster had to settle for fourth place.

Higgins, who works with partner and Junior shearing hopeful Robert Hubber for Palmer Bros, Dipton, was quick to thank some of her mentors, including veteran Marlborough shearer Chris Jones who gave her the comb which has become her favourite in shearing competitions, and South Island-based Scotsman, shearing trainer and 1994 World champion shearer Tom Wilson, who had "looked after" her gear in recent days.

It was her third novice win of the season, after previous victories at Winton and Gore, and she will graduate to Junior class next season.

She has, however, also a chance of making further history, by qualifying in third place for Saturday's Senior woolhandling semi-finals.

As for how long she'll keep competing before putting the degree to the uses for which it was originally intended, she said: Don't know. Until I stop making finals."

Result of the Golden Shears Novice Shearing final (2 sheep): Sarah Higgins (Havelock) 7min 28.401sec, 32.42pts, 1; Taiawhio Wati (Dargaville) 6min 32.151sec, 35.108pts, 2; Cody Greig (Levin) 9min 18.21sec, 36.911pts, 3; Rueben Alabaster (Taihape) 6min 20.17sec, 38.009pts, 4; Bailey Rush (Kimbolton) 9min 29.395sec, 41.47pts, 5; Sarah Edmonds (Masterton) 10min 26.281sec, 66.314pts, 6.

This is such a dream: - Scots lassie wins at Golden Shears - March 4, 2015

Lanarkshire lassie Claire Wilson thought she was just making up the numbers when she entered the novice woolhandling competition on the first day of the 55th Golden Shears in Masterton today.

But not only did she reach a final for the first time in New Zealand, the 21-year-old Scotswoman won - possibly to the chagrin of older brother Scott who has reached 12 senior shearing finals in New Zealand this summer, and is still waiting for his first win.

One of 18 who took part in the heats of the first of the 22 events to be decided over the three days of the World's greatest shearing and woolhandling championships she said after receiving her winner's red ribbon from Minister of Primary Industries Nathan Guy: "I didn't think I would even reach the semi-final."



Claire Wilson moments after the Golden Shears Novice woolhandling final - her first final, and her first win

Asked for the secret behind her sudden success, she said: "I don't even know. I can't believe it, this is such a dream."

From Biggar, in South Lanarkshire and about 50km southwest of Edinburgh, she has been woolhandling about 12 months, working mainly for her 23-year-old brother, who shears in the Golden Shears senior shearing heats tomorrow.

She came to New Zealand at the end of November, having already worked in Scotland and Norway, and got a job with Wairarapa contractor Greg Herrick.

The rein perhaps the secret. He's a former Golden Shears Open shearing finalist and Golden Shears championships society president, and the current president of the Golden Shears World Council.

As an added bonus were a couple of days from Masterton's Fiona Christensen, the 2011 and 2012 Golden Shears senior woolhandling champion.

She's only the second person from Scotland to win a Golden Shears International championships title in shearing or woolhandling, after 1990 senior winner Doug Lambie.

Scotland has, however, had two other big wins in Masterton - the World championships teams title in 1996 and Gavin Mutch's individual title three years ago.

Result of the Golden Shears Novice woolhandling final: Claire Wilson (Biggar, Scotland) 99.6pts, 1; Chynna Haney (Eketahuna) 102pts, 2; Bianca Hawea (Masterton) 109pts, 3; Hazel Wood (Ruawai) 136pts, 4.

Alabaster another Pre-Shears - Roll-on the Goldies - March 4, 2015

Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, this afternoon won the Pre-Shears Woolhandling Championships Open title in a final stacked with leading hopes for the three-day 55th Golden Shears which start in Masterton tomorrow (Thursday).

Competing at Massey University's Riverside Farm at Mikimiki, north of Masterton, it was a repeat of last year's top placings as Emaraina Braddick, of Eketahuna, was runner-up for the second year in a row.

The 2008 World champion Alabaster, a career schoolteacher who grew-up in the woolshed environment of father and late great shearer, will be among more than 30 chasing Golden Shears Open woolhandling glory this week.

She is yet to win the big Saturday-night final, and today's win was her only her second since winning a sixth New Zealand Championships Open title in Te Kuiti last March.

The 2008 Golden Shears champion and 2014 World championships runner-up Ronnie Goss, formerly of Kimbolton and now farming in the Mangamahu Valley, north of Whanganui, was third today, her third final since returning to competition last Friday.

Defending Golden Shears champion and 2012 World Champion Joel Henare, of Gisborne, was fourth.

He is the TAB favourite to win a third Golden Shears Open title this week, paying less than \$2. The second favourite, Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, was a rare finals absentee today, missing qualification by one place.

The Senior title today was won by Marton's Jimmy Samuels, who is also an Open-class shearer, while Hannah Spiers, of Eketahuna, won the Junior final.

The North Island Circuit Senior final was won by Connor Puha, of Kimbolton, while the North Island Junior Circuit final was won by Chonelle Kawana, of Masterton.

Novice, Junior and Senior woolhandling heats are on the first-day programme at the Golden Shears in Masterton's War Memorial Stadium tomorrow. The Open heats will be held on Friday.

Golden Shears in Masterton: Thursday-Saturday - March 4, 2015

Hundreds of competitors are descending on Masterton for the 55th Golden Shears international shearing and woolhandling championships which start tomorrow (Thursday) and end on Saturday.

Over 320 competitors are entered in the 22 events, but much attention will be on legendary Te Kuiti shearer David Fagan, who is retiring at the end of the season after 37 years of competitive shearing in which he has won 640 finals worldwide.

Fagan, 53, is one of more than 70 competitors in the glamour event, in which he has reached the final 26 times and posted 16 wins. His first final was in 1984 when runner-up to brother John, and he won the event for the first time in 1986. He last won in 2009.

He has won at least 25 other events at the Golden Shears, including nine wins in the National Circuit final, for which he is also the favourite.

The championships start with lower grade shearing and woolhandling heats preliminary stages in three woolpressing competitions, the pace stepping-up with the Open shearing and woolhandling heats on Friday morning.

A transtasman test will be held on Friday night, and the big finals will be held along with a shearing test between New Zealand and Australia on Saturday night.

A special feature will be a reunion of about 16 of the Open shearing championship finals from the first two decades of the Golden Shears, among them 81-year-old Southlander Ian "Snow" Harrison, the lone survivor of the first Open final in 1961.

Another feature will be a wool-sculpting competition held in conjunction with a Speedshear on Thursday night.

Large numbers of overseas competitors will be at the shears, from as far afield as Scotland and southern Chile.

The Golden Shears in Masterton is regarded as the World's major shearing and woolhandling festival, spurning a Golden Shears World Championships which were first held in England in 1977 and attract about 30 countries when held every 2-3 years.

Rankings pre Golden Shears - March 4, 2015

Shearing Sports New Zealand has annual rankings that were introduced in 1994, and the top performers over the course of the season are recognised with a presentation during the New Zealand Championships each year in Te Kuiti.

Competitions are rated in three grades, and for rankings purposes points are awarded to a maximum of 12pts for a win in an A grade show, 8pts in a B grade show and 6pts in a C grade show.

Following are the provisional Top 10 in each grade. No results have yet been available for lower grades at Ohura.

Open Shearing

David Fagan 12 wins, 205pts, 1; Cam Ferguson 6 finals, 104pts, 2; Tony Coster 5 wins, 81pts, 3; Gavin Mutch 2 wins, 80pts, 4; Nathan Stratford 1win, 77pts, 5; Grant Smith 1 win, 61pts, 6; Murray Henderson 0 wins, 61pts, 7; David Buick 3 wins, 54pts, 8; Dion King 1 win, 50pts, 9; Mark Grainger 0 wins, 50pts, 10.

Senior Shearing

Ethan Pankhurst 11 wins, 163pts, 1; Scott Wilson 0 wins, 94pts, 2; Robert Mudgway 2 wins, 63pts, 3; Gavin Kelly 1 win, 58pts, 4; Corey Smith 0 wins, 53pts, 5; Darren Alexander and Dylan McGruddy 2 wins, 51pts, 6 equal; Floyde Neil 1 win. 51pts, 8; Linton Palmer 0 wins, 38pts, 9; Michael Rolston 2 wins, 36pts, 10..

Intermediate Shearing

Hugh De Lacy 5 wins, 99pts, 1; Luis Pincol 2 wins, 86pts, 2; Kaleb Foote 1 win, 86pts, 3; Michael Herlihy 3 wins, 81pts, 4; Marley Waihape 3 wins, 75pts, 5; Lsarry Fleming 3 wins, 68pts, 6; Tegwyn Bradley 1 win, 57pts, 7; Tamone Smith 4 wins, 48pts, 8; Jaycob Bruynton 0 wins, 48pts, 9, Corey White 3 wins, 38pts, 10.

Junior Shearing

Laura Bradley 3 wins, 99pts, 1; Emily Te Kapa 7 wins, 83pts, 2; Connor Puha 0 wins, 69pts, 3; Hemi Lambert 5 wins, 65pts, 4; Ash Jones 2 wins, 65pts, 5; Kelly MacDonald 2 wins, 56pts, 6; Ricci Stevens 2 wins, 53pts, 7; Ross Thomson 1 win, 46pts, 8; Khochyce Forward 2 wins, 40pts, 9; Robert Hervey 2 wins, 39pts, 10.

Open Woolhandling

Keryn Herbert 6 wins, 157pts, 1; Joel Henare 7 wins, 101pts, 2; Sheree Alabaster 1 win, 58pts, 3; Pagan Rimene 4 wins, 48pts, 4; Rocky Hape-Taite and Logan Kamura 0 wins, 42pts, 5 equal; Tia Potae 0 wins, 31pts, 7; Emaraina Braddick and Larnie Morrell 0 wins, 29pts, 8 equal; Kodi Hawkins 0 wins, 20pts, 10.

Senior Woolhandling

Ana Braddick 4 wins, 88pts, 1; Erana Smith 4 wins, 65pts, 2; Adrienne Samuels 1 win, 45pts, 3; Sarah Higgins 2 wins, 40pts, 4; Connor Puha 1 win, 33pts, 5; Melanie Barrett 1 win, 32pts, 6; Sharnie Keefe 1 win, 37pts, 7; Rahna Williams 1 win, 28pts, 8; Stevie Mason-Smallman 1 win, 33pts, 9; Cherie Peterson 1 win, 22pts, 10.

Junior Woolhandling

Chiquita Tamepo 2 wins, 77pts, 1; Marika Braddick 2 wins, 42pts, Peketai Puna 1 win, 41pts, 3; Michael Herlihy 1 win, 33pts, 4; Shani Newton 0 wins, 30pts, 5; Hannah Spiers 1 win, 28pts, 6; Nera Hitaua 0 wins, 26pts, 7; Clarissa Lewis 2 wins, 24pts, 8; Nova Kumeroa Elers 1 win, 23pts, 9; Monique Mackey 0 wins, 22pts, 10.

Goldies woolhandling showdown: Herbert's goal - March 3, 2015

King Country woolhandler Keryn Herbert has done almost everything she ever wanted to do in woolhandling - except win the Golden Shears.

She's won a World teams title, she's represented New Zealand in multiple tests against Australia, she was New Zealand's top-ranked woolhandler for three seasons probably be again this season, and Shearing Sports New Zealand has made her a Master Woolhandler.

Now a near perennial Golden Shears Open finalist, the 35-year-old goes into this week with three wins in a row at the Southern Shears in Gore on one of her four trips to compete in the South Island this summer, and at Taumarunui and Apiti last Friday and Saturday.

But the Waitomo district's Sportsperson of the Year has been around long enough to know form and history count for little when it comes to the big night under the lights of the War Memorial Stadium where, by the law of averages, she and defending champion Joel Henare will be two of the four battling for the 30th Golden Shears Open Woolhandling title.

Herbert has been in five Golden Shears Open finals - from fourth to the now-late Gina Nathan in 2005 to a best result of runner-up last year to nemesis Joel Henare, whom she's faced in six finals this season, and been beaten every time.

She has however had success on the Golden Shears tables as North Island Circuit winner, and in yet another season of travel from one end of the country, including four trips to the South Island, this season won five titles, including the last three in a row at Gore, Taumarunui and Apiti.

It's expected to be showdown time at the Pre-Shears Woolhandling Championships tomorrow (Wednesday) at Mikimiki, north of Masterton, with Henare expected to be looking to get back on top in one of his last competitions before moving to Australia with fiancée Erica and their two children.

Most recently, Henare won the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final at Balclutha, but he didn't qualify for the Southern Shears final won by Herbert, and he didn't compete last Friday and Saturday at Taumarunui and Apiti.

It's about eight years since Herbert worked a full season, since the arrival of daughter Ngahua, but she retains a hugely competitive streak which dates back to growing up with other sports, with some success. She took to competitive woolhandling after breaking a leg at netball, and has reached 16 of the 18 Open woolhandling finals throughout the country this season.

With Henare having won seven finals and Herbert five, the next most successful competitor this season has been South Island-based Masterton woolhandler Pagan Rimene, who is yet to compete in a Golden Shears Open final, although she did win the Senior final in Masterton in 2006.

She has won four finals this season, beating both Henare and Herbert at the Canterbury Show in November and the Southern Circuit final at Balclutha last month.

The only others to have won Open titles during the summer are defending New Zealand Open champion Sheree Alabaster who won at the Dannevirke A and P Show on Waitangi Day, and Masterton Cushla Abraham, who had her first win the next day at Marton. She also has had a Golden Shears success, winning the Novice shearing final in 2008.

Among others with claims for positions in the top four in Saturday night's Goldies Open woolhandling final are 2008 winner Ronnie Goss, whose first competitions of the season since competing with Herbert in a trans-tasman test in Australia in November were at the weekend, and she reached both finals.

Eketahuna sisters Ngaio Hanson and Emaraina Braddick, sisters Monica and Tia Potae, and Rimene's sister, Larnie Morrell, who won the Golden Shears Junior title in 2007 and the senior title three years later, are among other contenders.

Herbert will be out to win a third consecutive North Island Circuit final, which carries with it selection in the New Zealand trans-tasman team.

Fagan notches rare treble - Taumarunui, Apiti, Pahiatua - March 02, 2015

Te Kuiti shearing legend David Fagan wrapped up the preparation for his last Golden Shears by completing a rare pre-shears weekend treble at the Pahiatua Shears today.

The 53-year-old Fagan's win followed victory at the Taumarunui Jamboree Shears on Friday and on Saturday at the Apiti Sports Shears, where he also shore New Zealand to victory over Wales in the second of two Elders Primary Wool tests.

The last time the Taumarunui, Apiti and Pahiatua Open finals treble was achieved was 18 years ago, in 1997.

Last year, there were three different winners, and none went on to win the Golden Shears. In the last 10 years, only John Kirkpatrick, in 2011, and Paul Avery, in 2005, went on to win the Golden Shears Open final after winning at Pahiatua.



Weekend double - Ash Jones, from Wales, had his first win at Apiti, and his second at Pahiatua. He works on a farm with Alun Jones, who won the Golden Shears junior final last year - Wales' first win at the Golden Shears in 23 years.

Sunday's win was his Fagan's 7th in a row and his 12th in his 33rd season of open-class shearing, which he had recently confirmed will be his last.

Despite the near invincibility of recent weeks the win came as a "shock" to Fagan who didn't think he'd done enough with the quality side of the job after finishing just fifth in the six-man race over 20 sheep each - more than 40 seconds behind 2012 World champion Gavin Mutch who took 16min 31.18sec.

Fagan, a TAB favourite to win a 17th Golden Shears Open title next Saturday, despite having not won the event since 2009 and having failed to reach the final in the last two years, added to the show-time successes of the weekend by also winning a hotel Speedshear at Cheltenham, between Apiti and Feilding, on Saturday night.

The runner-up today was on Sunday was Pongaroa farmer David Buick, and Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, was third.

Roger Neil, of Taumarunui, was a surprise finalist, returning to top finals after some years absence, and was sixth

A short while earlier he had watched son Floyde burn-off the field in the Senior final, shearing 10 sheep in 10min 41.63sec. But the 51 seconds gape to Ethan Pankhurst wasn't enough to stop the Masterton man's run off winning form, and the better quality helped him to another victory, by almost a point.

Hugh De Lacy, of Fernside, North Canterbury, won the intermediate final by almost 3pts from Kaleb Foote, of Waikaretu, with Chilean shearer Luis Pincol putting in another top effort for third.

Welsh shearer Ash Jones, who started working life as an apprentice panelbeater, won the junior final, having only the previous day had his first win, at Apiti.

The Pahiatua Shears, held in the Mangaone Valley woolshed of farmers Brent and Rachel Fouhy east of Pahiatua for the first time, attracted 108 shearers in four classes.



In range - Alun Jones tries out the cellphone coverage at Mangaone Valley.



Pen boy - Hugh De Lacy in the pen tipping-up for the senior finalists, just after his own Intermediate win.

More to come for Te Huia after Dubbo record: Watch this space - March 02, 2015

Shearing records king Stacey Te Huia has still more to come after setting a new nine-hour record finewool record of 530 merino ewes in nine hours near Dubbo in New South Wales on February 20.

The 36-year-old New Zealand gun, who put 17 on top of the previous record of 513 shorn by New Zealand-born Dwayne Black in West Australia 10 years ago, has his eyes on another record in Australian next month, and two more later in the year.

No details are confirmed, but Te Huia is making the best of a good thing with the fitness from an exacting preparation which targeted both the strongwool and finewool titles on either side of the Tasman just four weeks apart.

While he bailed-out of the bid for Rodney Sutton's strongwool ewes record when the target of 721 was out of sight by lunchtime at Te Hape on January 22, it was different story as he started on the Parkdale flock northwest of Dubbo four weeks later.

Based in Bathurst, but originally from Marton, Te Huia is now the holder of three World shearing records, the 8hrs solo strongwool record of 603 shorn in December 2010 and the two-stand nine hours strongwool record of 1341 shorn with Waikaretu shearer and contractor Sam Welch in January 2012, both shorn in Te Huia's home region in the Central North Island.

He first appeared in the World Sheep Shearing Records Society's record books as a 20-year-old in 1999 when he and brother Hayden shore a two stand record for 8hrs.

His sister, Kerri-Jo Te Huia, holds the Worlds women's solo lambshearing record for 8hrs at 507, also shorn in January 2012.

Starting at 7am (AEDT) on February 20, Te Huia shore 113 of the soft rolling skin polled merinos in the opening run of two hours and successive 1hr 45mins runs of 103, 105, 104 and 105, finishing at 9pm New Zealand time.

In his record in April 2005, Black shore runs of 112, 103, 98, 99 and 101, beating a record of 507 which had been set by New Zealand finewool maestro Dion Morrell near Tarras in Central Otago in 1997.

The following day, also at Parkdale, an attempt by Australian shearers Beau Guelfi and Bob White on the solo and two stand records over eight hours was abandoned half-way through with the pair well off the pace set by New Zealand-born Australia-based brother Cartwright and Michael-James Terry in 2003. By lunch, Guelfi and White had shorn 434, which compared with 461 shorn the Terry brothers by the time they went to lunch.

Guelfi shore runs of 108 and 112 for 220, while White shore 109 and 105 for 214. Breaking the solo record 12 years earlier, "Carty" Terry shore runs of 114, 119, 118 and 115 for a new mark of 466, while brother "M.J." shore runs of 112, 116, 115 and 115, for a tally of 458.

The records were run by Shearing Industry Promotions and the referees for Te Huia's bid were Paul Harris, from New Zealand, and Australian officials Ralph Blue, Bernie Walker and Grant Borchardt. Harris, Blue and Borchardt were joined by Australia-based New Zealander Peter Black for the Saturday's two-stand record, John Fraser, from New Zealand, and Arwyn Jones, from Wales, present as trainees and observers.

Elders Primary Wool test match - NZ wins in Fagan's swansong - March 02, 2015

New Zealand shearing legend David Fagan bowed out of international test match shearing by starring in a comfortable win over Wales in the final Elders Primary Wool international at the remote Apiti Sports in Northern Manawatu on February 28.

Fagan, 53, first represented New Zealand in 1985, and announced recently he will retire from all competition at the New Zealand Championships in home-town Te Kuiti in April.

But he looked anything but ready for retirement as he shored the 12-sheep contest in 10min 57sec, more than a sheep quicker than Welsh teammates Gwion Evans (12min 9sec) and Rhys Jones (12min 12sec), and a minute and a half quicker than his own teammate, Rakaia shearer Tony Coster.

Fagan also had the best quality points, and beat Coster by a 8pts, as the Kiwis scored a victory by more than 12pts, completing a 2-win after victory in the first Elders Primary Wool test at Gore a week earlier.

Such was the prestige of seeing the Kiwi great's last international, Welsh manager Bill Jones was unworried about the fact that Wales is still to win a test in New Zealand. Last July his team drew 2-2 with New Zealand, including Fagan, when Fagan and John Kirkpatrick toured the UK. Injury kept Kirkpatrick out of the home tests.

He said it was "fantastic" to be a part of the historic moment. Last week he told an audience in Gore that Fagan is "like God" to shearing fans in Wales.

Fagan said: "I think God might have something



The lineup: Wales team Gwion Evans, Bill Jones(manager) and Rhys Jones, the New Zealand team David Fagan, Paul Grainger(manager), and Tony Coster



The end: Fagan's last sheep in international test match shearing, the woolhandler is Logan Kamura.

Fagan said: "I think God might have something to say about that."

The respect, however, is mutual, Fagan having shorn more than 40 tests in Wales, starting at Corwen about 25 years ago. It was at Corwen in 1998 that he shored a 20-lambs final in 10min 17sec, regarded as a record for a 20-sheep event.

He loves shearing in Wales, and said: "The Welsh are very passionate about their shearing. The crowd support is remarkable."

"The lamb (shearing) shows in Wales are pretty special," he said. "When the lambs are good they're the best in the World."

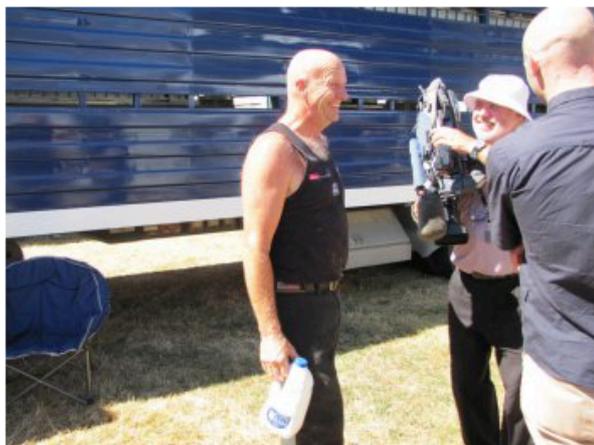
While Fagan heads to Masterton for his last Golden Shears this week, the Welsh return home for lambing, Jones spending a day settling his wife and two daughters back into the household before heading-off to work in Norway.

The test was the sixth match of the Welsh tour, and was followed by a TV One news crew and highlighted on national news a few hours later.

Result of the Elder Primary Wool Shearing test between New Zealand Wales at Apiti today (February 28): New Zealand 101.583pts (David Fagan 10min 57sec, 46.85pts; Tony Coster 12min 28sec, 54.733pts) beat Wales 113.717pts (Gwion Evans 12min 9sec, 55.95pts; Rhys Jones 12min 12sec, 57.7667pts). New Zealand won the series 2-2. A series in Wales last July was tied 2-2.



The chaser: Welsh shearer Gwion Evans does his best to keep - the closest to David Fagan but still beaten by more than a sheep.



The movie: David Fagan about to be interviewed by TVNZ's news crew

Jack the lad up for crack at dad in PGG Wrightson National - March 02, 2015

Young King Country shearer Jack Fagan has gatecrashed his own dad's party by qualifying for the final rounds of one of New Zealand's top shearing events to be shorn at the 55th Golden Shears in Masterton next Saturday.

While 53-year-old David Fagan heads the 12 qualifiers in the PGG Wrightson National Circuit, his son has scraped-in for the first time, in 11th place.

The qualifiers were decided at the fifth and final qualifying round on the second-shear sheep of the Pahiatua Shears yesterday.

Earlier rounds were held in October on finewooled merino sheep at Alexandra and long woolled crossbred at Waimate, on coarse woolled corriedale sheep at the Canteerbury Show in November, and on lambs at Marton last month.

The competition is regarded as the top all-round event in New Zealand shearing and started as the McSkimming Memorial Triple Crown in 1973.

David Fagan has had nine wins in the event which culminates in a final on all five types of sheep.

The top six in a first-round shear on Saturday morning qualify for the final on Saturday night, just before the Golden Shears Open final on second-shear sheep only and in which he hopes to win that title for a 17th and final time.

He first won the then Caltex National in 1986, the same night he won his first Golden Shears Open final. He's since won the National in 1988, 1992, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008.

Second qualifier is Rakaia shearer Tony Coster, a three-times PGG Wrightson National winner, and third is defending champion Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill.

The 12 qualifiers for the PGG Wrightson National finals are in order of qualifying: David Fagan (Te Kuiti) 44pts, 1, Tony Coster (Rakaia) 37pts, 2; Nathan Stratford (Invercargill) 33pts, 3; Cam Ferguson (Waipawa) 31pts, 4; Angus Moore (Kaitangata) 25pts, 5; Aaron Haynes (Feilding) 25pts, 6; Chas Tohiariki (Invercargill) 23pts, 7; David Buick (Pongaroa) 23pts, 8; Grant Smith (Rakaia) 21pts, 9; Troy Pyper (Invercargill) 21pts, 10; Jack Fagan (Te Kuiti) 19pts, 11; Gavin Mutch (Whangamomona) 17pts, 12.

Missed the cut: Joe Tumohe (Balclutha) 16pts, 13, Eru Weeds (Ohai) 16pts, 14; Leon Samuels (Invercargill) 13pts, 15; Charlie O'Neill (Alexandra) 9pts, 16; Jock O'Neill (Alexandra) 8pts, 17; Tipene Te Whata (Tautoro) 8pts, 18; Chris Vickers (Palmerston) 8pts, 19; Matt Tumohe (Balclutha) 6pts, 20; Axle Reid (Taihape) 5pts, 21.