

More honours for champion team - October 29, 2012

World shearing teams champions John Kirkpatrick and Cam Ferguson have won their second sports award recognising their success in Masterton in March.

Both linked to Hawke's Bay and Wairarapa iwi Ngati Kahungunu, they won the iwi's first Team of the Year honour at an annual sporting celebration in Waipukurau on Saturday.

Neither was able to be presented and the trophy was accepted on their behalf by Shearing Sports New Zealand media officer Doug Laing.

Each of the shearers had in previous years won the Awards Sportsman of the Year title, while earlier this year, being from Napier and Waipawa respectively, they won the Hawke's Bay Team of the Year title.

In each case, the Supreme honour was claimed by All Blacks rugby star Israel Dagg, who was also unable to be present on Saturday.

22 years away, but worth the trip - October 29, 2012

Veteran champion David Fagan is calling on contractors to take a greater role in encouraging their young shearers and woolhandlers into competition after watching another early-season show struggle for numbers at the weekend.

The prompting came after Fagan and son Jack travelled more than four hours each way from Te Kuiti to Carterton for the Wairarapa Spring Shears on Saturday.

They were rewarded with a another satisfying father-and-son double, the Open and Senior victories in David Fagan's first visit to the Show at the Clareville showgrounds since winning the Wairarapa title in 1990.

The pair left Te Kuiti about 4am, and arrived home about 8.30pm, David having won the Open final by 5.35pts and Jack the senior title by 2.25pts. Runner-up in the Open was Taihape's Axle Reid, achieving the best result of his short Open-class career, while Kane Kapene, of Martinborough, had his best Senior result in finishing runner-up to Jack Fagan.

Top-ranked woolhandler Keryn Herbert, from Te Awamutu, also made the most of a long trip by winning the Open woolhandling final, in which Hine Biddle, of Masterton, was second.

The competitions attracted 40 shearing entries, with 11 in the Open and 11 in the Junior, and two in the first Novice competition of the season.

There were just 21 entries across the three woolhandling classes, including 10 in the Open, but just 4 in the Senior class.

David Fagan said entries at the Hawke's Bay Show's Great Raihania Shears eight days earlier were also disappointing in some classes.

"The contractors have got to put their hands and encourage their workers to go along to the competitions," he said. "Ultimately it's going to make them all better in the work-place, and the contractor will benefit."

He conceded it was the motivated son Jack who got him to make the trip.. "Jack was keen to go there, he's just keen to compete, it's pretty quiet up here (in Te Kuiti) and it was good to go and support the Show," he said.

He said that while shows traditionally struggle to get good competition sheep in the early stages of the season, those at Carterton were "quite good."

He shored the 15 in the final in 14min 46sec, beating Dannevirke's Paerata Abraham off the board by just four seconds. Lee Edmonds, of Masterton, was next in 14min 58sec, and Reid was last off 39 seconds further away, but making the cleanest job on the board.

Abraham's brother-in-law, Masterton shearer David Gordon, won the Intermediate final, while the Junior final was won by Feilding shearer Quinton Sanson, his second victory of the season drawing him level with runner-up Liam Quinlivan, of Waipukurau, at the top of the season's Junior ranking points table. Hamish Pollock, also from Hawke's Bay, won the Novice event.

Herbert's win in the Open woolhandling final was her second of the season, taking her into second place on the season's rankings, still trailing three-show winner and World champion Joel Henare, who took the weekend off to celebrate his 21st birthday.

The Senior woolhandling final was an all-Wairarapa affair, won by Tumanako Waikare, of Masterton, while Golden Shears championships society secretary Angeline Colquhoun won the Junior final.

Australia on top in new Trans Tasman series opener - October 29, 2012

New Zealand has suffered a double defeat in the machine shearing and woolhandling tests against Australia in Warnambool, near Melbourne.

The Shearing Sports New Zealand team did however derive some success, with a victory to its two blades shearers denying Australia a cleansweep of the three matches at Saturday's Romney Shears, which also incorporated the Australian national championships.

Arriving in Australia just two days before the Trans Tasman Series first-leg matches, it was always going to be hard for the machine shearers, particularly Golden Shears and New Zealand Open champion John Kirkpatrick on the big Australian merinos which made-up half the contest in which three shearers from each country each shored 16 sheep.

But it was still a close affair with the South Australians Shannon Warnest and Nathan Meaney and West Australian Mark Buscomb winning by just two points from the black single-ted team of Kirkpatrick, from Napier, and South Island shearers Angus Moore, of Ward, in Marlborough, and Chris Vickers, of Palmerston, North Otago.



Chris Vickers, the North Otago shearer who represented New Zealand in the first Trans Tasman shearing test of the season as a result of finishing second to Australian shearer Damian Boyle in the New Zealand Merino Championships in Alexandra.

It was Australia's third test match win against New Zealand in a row, following two wins last year, in Masterton and Christchurch.

The woolhandling test was another memorable moment for West Australia-based New Zealander Aroha Garvin, the 2000 World champion who in Christchurch last year helped Australia to their first woolhandling test match win over New Zealand in 12 years, and who was third to New Zealanders Joel Henare and Joanne Kumeroa in this year's World Championship final in Masterton.

On Saturday she and brother Joe Garvin were up against a different New Zealand team of 2008 World champion Sheree Alabaster, and Dannevirke woolhandler Rocky Hape-Taite, who is yet to win an Open competition final.

The blades shearing test was won by Brian Thomson, of Christchurch, and Tim Hogg, of Timaru, beating Australians John Dalla and Peter Artidge.

A blades test rematch is scheduled for the Canterbury Show next month, while the second leg of the annual Trans Tasman machine shearing and woolhandling series will be held at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

Shannon Warnest again won the Australian title, and with runner-up Justin Dolphin and third-placed Robbie Glover will make up an all southern-states team for the test in Masterton. Warnest and Dolphin represented South Australia, and Glover represented Tasmania.

A new and all NSW team will represent Australia in the woolhandling test, after Kayla Garner won the national final, with Angela Wakely the runner-up.

Tightening the grip - Coster nails Ashburton Shears again - October 28, 2012

A Mid-Canterbury stranglehold on the local Ashburton A and P Show's Open shearing title was extended another year when Rakaia gun Tony Coster won the title for a third year in a row on Saturday.

With third placegetter Grant Smith, also of Rakaia, having won most recently three times from 2007 to 2009, it is now six years since the title was won by anyone from outside the area. Both shearers faced

a stern challenge from the deep south, ultimately separated by Darrin Forde, formerly of Winton and now at Lornville and who had won the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate a fortnight earlier.

But as it was at Waimate it was first-year Open shearer Shaun Mathieson, of Riverton, who won the race, shearing 20 sheep in the final in 19min 53.5sec, the only one of the five finalists to break the minute-per-sheep barrier.

It was 10 seconds quicker than Forde, and a minute quicker than Coster and Smith, but ultimately it was the Coster quality which won the contest in which the first three on total points were all former New Zealand representatives.

A winner also at Rangiora seven days earlier, with second and third placings in first division championships at Alexandra and Waimate in his only other shears of the season, Coster now heads Shearing Sports New Zealand's points rankings for the season.

Rakaia-based Gisborne shearer and rookie competitor Damian Bloomfield caused a boilover in the Senior event.

Second off the board in a 10-sheep final, over half-a-minute after behind Rakaia-based Taumarunui shearer Floyd Neil, who took 14min 42.09sec, Bloomfield turned the tables on quality and won by just over a point.

Reversing the outcome of the previous weekend's Rangiora show, Rakaia shearer Phoenix Hawkins beat Lincoln student and Masterton shearer Ethan Pankhurst in the Intermediate final, having also won the event in Ashburton last year.

The Junior final was won by Kahn Culshaw, of Ashburton, with Grant Smith's nephew, Cory, the runner-up, and son Alex 5th.

Grading appeal successful - October 26, 2012

Shearing Sports New Zealand has upheld an appeal by shearer Fraser Quinlivan against the decision to upgrade him from Intermediate to Senior class.

Quinlivan, from Otane, therefore remains in Intermediate class, and his victory in the class at the Great Raihania Shears in Hastings last Friday stands.

The upgrading of a number of shearers and woolhandlers was decided by Shearing Sports New Zealand at its annual conference in Auckland in August, from criteria based on competition results and on tallies in the woolshed.

The chairman, Gavin Rowland, said the appeal was successful due to the number of wins and the shearer's tallies being insufficient to justify the upgrading.

Generally shearers are promoted at the end of the season, from Junior to Intermediate if they have had three or more Junior wins, from Intermediate to Senior if they've had five or more Intermediate wins, and from Senior to Open if they've had more than 10 Senior wins.

The maximum tallies used for regrading purposes are in the Competition Directory.

David Fagan denied a memorable double - October 16, 2011

New Zealand representative Dion King had to put in one of his better performances of quality shearing to beat a top quality lineup and deny the legendary David Fagan a memorable double in the new season's first North Island shearing competition in Gisborne on Saturday.

Shearing at the Poverty Bay Show, which attracted almost 100 shearers and woolhandlers, Te Kuiti gun Fagan was trying to add victory in his first show as a 50-year-old to his last at the age of 49 at Waimate a week earlier, and also complete a double he had scored last season.

He had the crowd in a frenzy as he whipped through his 15 sheep to be first finished in 13 min 31 sec, beating Napier shearer King by 11 seconds.

But the time advantage was not enough to make up for a couple of blemishes, and when all points were counted he was overtaken by King as well as World champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, and Golden Shears champion and New Zealand trans-tasman series representative John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, who had each finished almost blow-for-blow in just under 14 minutes.

The strength of shearing on the east coast of the North Island was highlighted by the fact that all four shearing titles went to shearers from the region.

Former top national Junior and Intermediate shearer Wi Poutu Ngarangione, of Gisborne, won the senior final after finishing third last year, Henare Nia Nia, also of Gisborne, won the Intermediate final, shutting-out Waimate runner-up Tui Pene, of Wapawa, and the Junior final was a triumphant debut for Catherine Mulhooly, of Matawai.

The Open woolhandling final, the latest round in New Zealand's World Championships selection series, was won by Tia Potae, of Milton, less than two points clear of teams World Champion Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu.

Mayanne Baty returned home to win her local Senior woolhandling final, after being runner-up seven days earlier at Waimate, and Junior woolhandler Steve Mason-Smallman, of Taihape, became the first competitor in the Shearing Sports New Zealand season to win two titles, proving just as good with the coast's crossbred long-wool as on the finewool of Alexandras merinos a fortnight ago.

[Competition results for the Poverty Bay show can be found here](#)

Kirkpatrick pulls rank again - October 22, 2011

Evergreen national Open rankings leader John Kirkpatrick is holding onto a place at the top of the new points-table, despite being yet to win an event in the new season.

Thanks to the extra points from second placing to Rowland Smith at the Auckland Show which kicked-off the new rankings last Easter, and placings at Gisborne and Hastings in the last fortnight, Kirkpatrick holds a one-point lead over former PGG Wrightson National champion Tony Coster.

Coster is the only Open shearer to reach the finals at all three attempts in the new season, a feat which has been matched by Maitua's Brett Roberts in the Senior class, adding a Great Raihania Shears title in Hastings on Saturday to a winner's cheque at Alexandra and the runner-up ribbon in Waimate.

He shares the Senior rankings lead with Te Kuiti's Jack Fagan, who carried-through winning points from the Auckland show.

World champion Joel Henare is the only competitor in shearing or woolhandling with three wins from three outings in the new woolhandling season, with victories at Alexandra, Gisborne and Hastings.

Masterton shearers Ethan Pankhurst and David Gordon have also reached three successive finals, both having reached the Senior showdown at Alexandra, where there was no Intermediate event, before reverting to their own class.

The Senior woolhandling rankings are led by Martinbough's Kodi Hawkins with two wins in two finals in the South Island.

Rankings are based on points for placings in finals throughout the season, with competitions in three points categories depending on total prize value.. Points are calculated up to and including the New Zealand Championships each year.

New rankings start from the first competition after Te Kuiti, as happened with the Easter Show last season.

The Top five in each class are:

Shearing:

Open: John Kirkpatrick 1, Tony Coster 2, Dion King 3, Rowland Smith 19, Grant Smith and David Fagan 5eq.

Senior: Brett Roberts and Jack Fagan 1eq, Linton Palmer and Mohi Gray 3eq, Floyd Neil 5.

Intermediate: Adam Morton 1, Phoenix Hawkins and Alex Smith (Rakaia) 2eq, David Gordon and Ethan Pankhurst 4eq.

Junior: Liam Quinlivan 1, Quinton Sanson 2, Corey Smith 3, Duran Smith 4, Taniora Poole and Arden Donnelly 5eq.

Blades: Tim Hogg 1, Chris Russell 2, Trevor Doran and Bill Michelle 3eq, Rihard Watson 5.

Woolhandling:

Open: Joel Henare 1, Tina Rimene 2, Keryn Herbert 3, Sheree Alabaster 4, Monica Potae 5.

Senior: Kodi Hawkins 1, Amber Stringer 2, Kyle Wihongi 3, Maiden Elers 4, Rahna Watson Paul 5.

Junior: Kandy Huata 1, Blaze Peneha 2, Sarah Higgin and Raylene Johnson and Kereone Ngarangione 3eq.

King, The Master, claims win No 5 at The Great Raihania Shearst - October 21, 2012

Hastings shearer Dion King maintained his domination of the Great Raihania Shears on Saturday with a fifth win in its nine Open finals since the event was established to revive competition shearing at the Hawke's Bay Show in 2004.

But, having won the first three finals and then claimed the title again in 2010, it was still possibly the proudest of home shows for King who soon after the final was presented with a trophy recognising his acclaim as a Master Shearer, as decided at the recent annual meeting of Shearing Sports New Zealand.

The 2006 Golden Shears champion and World nine-hour lambshearing record holder told more than 200 spectators that achieving Master Status was one of his goals as he first shored in competition 14 years ago.



THE MASTER: Dion King, with the goods after winning the Great Raihania Open for a fifth time, and being presented with his Master Shearer award. The Master award was presented by Shearing Sports New Zealand North Island chairman Bill Gaskill.

"You'll get there if you stick at it," he said to younger shearers embarking on the same path. Starting the season with 40 Open final wins in New Zealand since his first at Tikokino in March 2002, King warranted favouritism for the final in the historic pavilion at the Tomoana Showgrounds in Hastings, after winning the opening North Island event in Gisborne a week earlier.

But he still had to get past the only two others to win the Great Raihania title, defending champion and reigning Golden Shears and New Zealand Open champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, who had also won in Hastings in 2007 and 2008, and 2009 winner and King Country icon David Fagan.

It was King who made the pace in the four-man final over 20 full-wooled sheep, which he shored in 17min 13sec, heading Kirkpatrick by 11 seconds, both well clear of third-man-off and Hawke's Bay-based Northland shearer Rowland Smith, another 41 seconds adrift but ultimately named runner-up after all time and quality points were calculated.

Fagan, with still two to shear when King had finished, had to settle for fourth place. Three World champions were among the four Open Woolhandling finalists, the honours going to man-of-the-moment Joel Henare, of Gisborne.

Winner of the title once previously, in 2009, Henare won the World individual and teams titles in Masterton last March, and has been invincible in the first three finals of the new season, winning the NZ Merino Open woolhandling title at Alexandra and then his first Poverty Bay Open title...

On Saturday, 2008 World champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, was runner-up, and her 2010 World Champion teams partner and defending Great Raihania Shears champion Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, was third. Tokomaru Bay-based South Otago woolhandler Monica Potae was fourth. Brett Roberts, of Matura, provided his Gisborne and Northern Hawke's Bay whanau with plenty to celebrate as he beat Fagan's son, Jack, in the Senior shearing final. The Fraser Quinlivan, of Otane, claimed the third win of his career when he won the Intermediate final, and Liam Quinlivan, of Waipukurau, won the Junior final.

There was a unique result in the Junior woolhandling final, won by Intermediate shearing finalist, former national Junior lambshearing champion, and 2010 50th Golden Shears Novice shearing winner David Gordon, of Masterton. His first win on the tables, it emulated the versatility of sister Cushla who has also won finals at both shearing and woolhandling.

Ellesmere goes on, despite the rain - October 15, 2012

The shearing was one of the few things to see the day out as rain all-but cancelled the Ellesmere A and P Show at Leeston.

The rain, and a clash with the NZ Spring Shears about 170km away at Waimate, cut the entries drastically to just 11 shearers, and competition was restricted to just the Senior and Junior classes.

Waiau shearer Greg Moriarty won the senior event, in which he had been runner-up in 2009 and third a year later, and Robert Hewett, of Palmerston, showed some of the benefits of a UK trip a few months ago by winning the Junior event.

Elsewhere on the showgrounds, equestrian events were cancelled because of the deluge and its impact on access to, in and around the venue.

Henare shows 'em how in home town Gisborne show - October 15, 2012

World champion woolhandler Joel Henare made a triumphant return to home-town Gisborne with a comfortable win at the Poverty Bay Show on Saturday.

Starting his seventh season in the Open class Henare had never won the big title at his local show, his last win on the board and tables in Gisborne being in the Senior final in 2005.

He was runner-up in the Open final in 2006, 2008 and 2009, and after winning the Shearing Sports New Zealand's season's opening final on Merino wool at Alexandra last week bypassed the weekend's New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate to finally nail-it in a final which featured 2007-2009 winner and 2008 World Champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape.

This time Alabaster had to settle for third place, with Monica Potae, from Milton, South Otago, finishing runner-up.

Rahna Watson Paul, employed by Elders Primary Wool in Gisborne but from Hastings, won the Senior woolhandling final from runner-up Kyle Wihongi, also of Hastings, while the Junior woolhandling final provided a maiden win for Keone Ngarangione, of Gisborne.

Interestingly none of the finalists in the three grades had been in finals at Gisborne last year.

Hastings shearer Dion King retained the Poverty Bay Show open shearing title with an outstanding performance, shearing the 15 final sheep in 12min 50sec.

He won by almost half a sheep from Waipawa gun Cam Ferguson in a battle for time honours between two shearers who were accorded Master Shearer status by Shearing Sports New Zealand in the off-season.

Ultimately, Ferguson had to settle for third as reigning Golden Shears Open and New Zealand Open champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, with the better quality points, claimed second place in the first of several likely all-Hawke's Bay in the summer's Open-class trifectas.

Fourth was Pongaroa farmer David Buick, with early indications of a serious challenge throughout the season after going close to making his first Golden Shears Open final last summer.

The 2010 winner, Te Kuiti veteran David Fagan, was among those eliminated in the semi-finals, but was then able to watch as son Jack Fagan got his first win of his expected last season in the Senior class, carrying-on from top form in Britain in July and August.

The protégé finished more than half-a-minute before his nearest rival on the board, Ruatoria shearer Nukutai Tuhura, and was in a class of his own with quality, claiming victory by 7.3pts from eventual runner-up and Gisborne shearer Henare Niania, who had won the Intermediate final 12 months earlier.

The intermediate final was won by rookie contractor Adam Morton, of Wairoa, and Quinton Sanson, of Feilding, had a first-up Junior win.

The competitions, the first of the new season in the North Island, attracted 54 shearers, with 17 in the Open, 14 seniors, a disappointing 6 in the Intermediate grade, and 17 juniors. The woolhandlers comprised 9 in the Open, 8 seniors, and a disappointing entry of five in the Junior class.

Heavy rain for about an hour in the early-afternoon had the pavilion packed as hundreds sought cover at the A and P Show

King does it again as shearing guns fire-up Gisborne Show - October 15, 2011

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King shored the 15 final sheep in 12min 50sec, to win the race by almost half a sheep from Waipawa gun Cam Ferguson in a battle for time honours between two shearers who were accorded Master Shearer status by Shearing Sports New Zealand in the off-season.

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Young Te Kuiti gun Jack Fagan got his first win of his expected last season in the Senior class, carrying on from top form in Britain in July and August. The win came after father and veteran champion David Fagan ended his day in the Open semi-finals.

Jack Fagan finished more than half-a-minute before his nearest rival on the board, Ruatoria shearer Nukutai Tuhura, and was in a class of his own with quality, claiming victory by 7.3pts from eventual runner-up Henare Niania, of Gisborne.

The intermediate final was won by rookie contractor Adam Morton, of Wairoa, and Quinton Sanson, of Feilding, had a first-up Junior win.

World champion woolhandler Joel Henare wowed his home crowd by dominating the Open woolhandling final, with a comfortable win over runner-up Monica Potae, from Milton, in South Otago, with 2008 World champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, third, beating fourth finalist, Vicky Smith, of Gisborne.

Rahna Watson Paul, based in Gisborne with Elders Primary Wool but from Hastings, won the Senior woolhandling final from runner-up Kyle Wihongi, also of Hastings, while the Junior woolhandling final provided a maiden win for Keone Ngarangione, of Gisborne.

The competitions, the first of the new season in the North Island, attracted 54 shearers and 22 woolhandlers. Heavy rain in the early-afternoon had the pavilion packed as hundreds sought cover at the A and P Show.

Results of the Poverty Bay Show Shears at Gisborne on Saturday, October 13, 2012:

Shearing:

Open final (15 sheep): Dion King (Hastings) 12min 50sec, 53.76pts, 1; John Kirkpatrick (Napier) 13min 43sec, 55.14pts, 2; Cam Ferguson (Waipawa) 13min 12sec, 56.53pts, 3; David Buick (Pongaroa) 13min 51sec, 61.54pts, 4.

Senior final (8 sheep): Jack Fagan (Te Kuiti) 9min 49sec, 47.95pts, 1; Henare Niania (Gisborne) 11min 20sec, 55.25pts, 2; Tui Pene (Waipawa) 10min 40sec, 57.375pts, 3; Nukutai Tuhura (Ruatoria) 10min 11sec, 59.3pts, 4.

Intermediate final (4 sheep): Adam Morton (Wairoa) 6min 23sec, 38.4pts, 1; David Gordon (Masterton) 6min 7sec, 38.85pts, 2; Alex Smith (Wairoa) 6min 34sec, 42.45pts, 3; Terence Durdy (Gisborne) 6min 16sec, 46.3pts, 4.

Senior final (3 sheep): Quinton Sanson (Feilding) 8min 14sec, 41.03pts, 1; Ramone Smith (Gisborne) 8min 55sec, 52.41pts, 2; Duran Smith (Gisborne) 8min 7sec, 53.68pts, 3; Holly Granich (Matawai) 12min 51sec, 59.55pts, 4.

Woolhandling:

Open final: Joel Henare (Gisborne) 107.4pts, 1; Monica Potae (Milton/Tokomaru Bay) 155.8pts, 2; Sheree Alabaster (Taihape) 160.6pts, 3; Vicky Smith (Gisborne) 209.6pts, 4.

Senior final: Rahna Watson-Paul (Hastings) 126pts, 1; Kyle Wihongi (Hastings) 133.4pts, 2; Maiden Elers (Mataura) 141.8pts, 3; Carmen Smith (Pongaroa) 144pts, 4.

Junior final: Keone Ngarangione (Gisborne) 100pts, 1; Te Rangi Edmonds (-) 100.3pts, 2; Blaze Pineaha (Hastings) 113pts, 3; Viv Taitapanui (Opotiki) 142pts, 4.

Forde marches back to top in Spring shears - October 15, 2012

Southland veteran Darrin Forde took advantage of the absence of the top North Island shearers and his leading southern opposition to win his third New Zealand Spring Shears Open title in Waimate on Saturday.

Along with such recent regular North Island competitors as 10-times winner David Fagan and 2009 champion Cam Ferguson, the event was also missing Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford, winner six times in 2001 and from 2004 to 2008, the last South Island victory until the weekend. Riverton shearer and first-year Open-class shearer Shaun Mathieson won the race over 16 hoggets, shorn in 17min 33sec to beat Forde off the board by 3.7 seconds, but had to settle for fifth place overall.



Darrin Forde: Pictured a long way from home at Waipukurau as he chased the World championships team selection series a year ago. On Saturday, the 47-year-old was much more at home, even if it involved a five-hour trip, when he won the New Zealand Spring Shears Open final in Waimate.

Forde's combined time and quality points enabled him to hold out Rakaia guns Tony Coster and Grant Smith, second and third respectively. Coster had the best pen points while Smith had easily the best pen points in the six-man final.

Forde, 47, had previously won the event in 1998 and 2003, the starts of two of the four seasons in which he won the McSkimming Memorial Triple Crown, which he claimed three times as the DB Daught National and once as the PGG Wrightson National.

It's the second leg of the series, and he claimed the maximum 12 series points by being top qualifier from the heats.

While he was second in the series last year to Marlborough shearer Angus Moore, who with West Coast gun Jason Win was a surprise absentee from Saturday's final, wins have been few and far between for Forde in recent years, his last being at Warrnambool in Australia three years ago. Dipton shearer Cory Palmer won the Senior final by almost two points from Matura's Brett Roberts, the Intermediate final was won by Phoenix Hawkins, of Rakaia, and Cory Smith, also of Rakaia, won the Junior title.

Last season's top-ranker woolhandler and recently-acclaimed Master Woolhandler Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, won the Open woolhandling final, in which New Zealand Transtasman series team member Rocky Hape-Taite, of Dannevirke, was runner-up. Third was Masterton's Tina Rimene, and fourth Taiwha Nelson, of Alexandra.

Herbert had won in 2008, and was third in 2010 and fourth last year.

Martinborough's Kodi Hawkins made it two-from-two in the first week of the new Senior woolhandling season with a win at Waimate to go with victory in the Merino championships at Alexandra seven days earlier, and the Junior woolhandling final provided a debut victory for Sarah Higgins, from Marlborough.

With the event having an occasional calendar clash with the Poverty Bay Shears in Gisborne, and torrential rain in the area having some wondering whether the day would last, entries were still considered reasonable, with 73 shearers and 39 woolhandlers competing.

The Open shearing had 27 entries, Senior 19, Intermediate 10 and Junior 7, while 16 started in the Open woolhandling, with 13 in the Senior grade and 7 in the Junior heats.

Aussie wins NZ merino shearing title, again - October 7, 2012

West Australian shearer Damien Boyle won the New Zealand Merino finewool shearing championship for a third year in a row as the Shearing Sports New Zealand season opened in Alexandra on Saturday, October 6.

He beat runner-up Chris Vickers, of Palmerston, by almost seven points, with seven points back to third placegetter Tony Coster, of Rakaia. Charlie O'Neill, who was first to finish, had to settle for fifth place overall. He shored the 12 sheep in 24min 26.05sec, heading next-man-off Boyle by over five seconds, but it was almost a minute-and-a-half behind Boyle's time in last year's victory.

Fourth was Mossburn contractor Mana Te Whata, the most successful shearer in the 51 years of the event with six wins (1987-90, 1993 and 1995), and sixth was Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford, whose 2009 win was the last by a New Zealander.

The result for Vickers was probably the best of his career, winning him a black singlet for the first test in the home-and-away trans-tasman series during the Romney Shears in Warrnambool, Vic., at the end of this month. He joins Golden Shears champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, and PGG Wrightson series winner Angus Moore of Ward, with Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, and Rocky Hape-Taite, of Danevirke, lined-up for the woolhandling test.

World woolhandling champion Joel Henare, of Gisborne and back in the country after a stint in Australia, won his first New Zealand Merino Championships open title, after finishing second twice previously, and Cushla Abraham, of Masterton, was runner-up in her first Open-class competition. Abraham's success was part of a unique weekend for Wairarapa competitors, with third-placed former event winner Tina Rimene third and another open-class newcomer Sharnie Graham, fourth, both also from Masterton.

Kodi Hawkins, from Martinborough, won the senior woolhandling final, while the senior shearing final also featured first-time seniors David Gordon and Ethan Pankhurst, also both from Masterton. Beefy Mataura shearer Brett Roberts started off what will probably be his last season before tackling the big guns of the Open class, winning the senior final in which he was first off the board in 18min 1sec, beating second-man-off Gordon by 16 seconds. But second-place, a remarkable 19pts adrift, ultimately went to Tamehana Karauria, originally from Gisborne.

The junior woolhandling final was won by Raylene Johnstone.

Meanwhile, a New Zealand team of Stratford, Rakaia shearer Tony Coster and hometown merino king Colin O'Neill won the trans-tasman challenge against the Perth Show team of Boyle and brother Brendon, and Todd Wegner. O'Neill, shearing five sheep in 10min 11.75sec won the race for time honours by about seven seconds from Damian Boyle, who claimed best individual points in a test the Kiwis won by 16pts.

The Open shearing event was the first round of this year's Wrightson PGG National, the second tasking place at the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate this Friday and Saturday, the second day clashing for the first time in several years with the Poverty Bay Show in Gisborne.

Alexandra organisers were delighted with the number of competitors in the Show at the weekend.