

## Coster completes a Rangiora treble - 29 October, 2013

New Zealand 2013 UK tour representative Tony Coster won his third consecutive Northern A and P Rangiora Show Open shearing title with yet another victory over fellow Rakaia shearer Grant Smith on Saturday.

Despite the gale-force winds which devastated much of the show, there were 44 entries in the five shearing classes, including nine in the Blades, which was won by 2012 World Championships representative Mike McConnell, of Albury.

Canterbury-based Ethan Pankhurst, of Masterton, won his first Senior title, after being runner-up at both Waimate and Ellesmere, young Rakaia shearer Corey Smith had his first Intermediate win, having won 11 Junior finals last year, and Rangiora-based Hugh De Lacy, of Fernside, had his first Junior win, delighting father and award-winning agricultural journalist Hugh De Lacy (Snr), who relived his younger days by shearing in the Open heats.

Coster is closing-in on a career milestone of 50 Open wins, mainly in the South Island but including his four biggies - three consecutive McSkimming Memorial Triple Crown national championship final wins at the Golden Shears in Masterton and this year's New Zealand Shears Circuit final win in Te Kuiti.

In Coster's six Rangiora wins, which include an earlier treble from 2004 to 2006, Smith has been second three times and third once. On Saturday, Coster sheared the 16 sheep in 18min 35sec, and beat Smith by 46 seconds on the board, and more than 9pts in the final count.

Runner-up at both Waimate and Ellesmere in the previous fortnight, Pankhurst was also well in charge in his final, finishing a sheep ahead of his nearest rival and beating Senior class stalwarts Greg Moriarty and Rowan Nesbit by more than 12 points.

Corey Smith's win in the Junior event came after Waimate and Ellesmere winner and Irish shearer Joseph Stephens was eliminated in the heats.

There are six more competitions in the South Island before Christmas, with the Ashburton Show on Saturday and the Pleasant Point Gymkhana on Sunday followed by the Marlborough the following Saturday, the Canterbury Show on November 14-15, the Nelson Show and West Otago Shears at Tapanui on November 23, and the Top of the South finals in Nelson the next day.

(See [Breaking News page](#) or Competition Results for comprehensive results of all finals).

## Aussies all at home in transtasman shears tests - 27 October, 2013

The Shearing Sports New Zealand team has returned home after failing for the second year in a row to win either of its two transtasman tests in Australia.

In the shearing test at the Warrnambool Agricultural Show on the Victoria southwest coast on Saturday(October 26), Hawke's Bay's John Kirkpatrick and Rowland Smith, and teammate Dion Morrell, of Central Otago, succumbed by almost 30 points against former World champion Shannon Warnest and Australian teammates Justin Dolphin and Robert Glover.

It was however a much closer affair in the woolhandling test, where just over three points separated Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Tia Potae, of Milton, from the triumphant Australian pair of Angela Wakeley and Kayla Garner.

Australia had won both tests in Warrnambool last year, but the New Zealand teams reversed the results at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

The Kiwi shearers again had to bow to the mastery of Warnest, who has shorn 22 transtasman tests since his first in 2000, the year the finewool master from South Australia won the first of his two jm.



STILL WINNING: Pictured in a transtasman partnership preparing for the 2008 World championships in Norway, Australian shearing icon Shannon Warnest and Kiwi woolhandling legend Joanne Kumeroa were still winning at the weekend's Romney Shears at the 160th Warrnambool Agricultural Show. Warnest shore in his 20th consecutive test, his 12th win with the Australian team, and the 15th time as top individual. Australia-based Kumeroa, from Whanganui, won the Romney Shears ope woolhandling title.

At 39, Warnest has had a decade-long unbroken run of 20 tests in the series of two tests home-and-away each summer, being the top individual 15 times, and figuring in 12 Australia wins, including 3 away from home. All are transtasman series records.

Kiwi finewool guru Morrell, surprise runner-up to West Australian shearer Damien Boyle in the recent New Zealand Merino Championships and therefore selected at the age of 50 and a decade after last donning the black singlet and silver fern, had a serious crack at unseating Warnest by forcing the pace in the 12 sheep contest, a mixture of finewool and crossbred sheep.

But, cutting his pen out in 17min 51sec, and beating Warnest by 15 seconds, Morrell had sacrificed quality, and the time served only to help minimise the size of the points margin at the end.

There was better news for the New Zealand contingent in the Romney Shears Australian crossbred finals, Kirkpatrick successfully defending the shearing title he won last year, and Australia-based multiple World, Golden Shears and New Zealand champion Joanne Kumeroa, of Whanganui, winning the woolhandling title.

Again, it was a near all-New Zealand shearing final, with Smith, the 2010 winner, being the runner-up, followed in order by the Te Kuiti NZ Shears contingent of Wairarapa shearer David Buick and Te Kuiti shearers Mark Grainger and Digger Balme, leaving Warnest to claim only the sixth-place money.

The transtasman shearing tests started at Euroa in 1974, and the series was suspended in 1984 following disruption in the Australian shearing industry and conflict with New Zealand shearers in the workplace. It was resumed in 1997 and there's now been 54 tests, with New Zealand winning 28 and Australia 26.

There've been 31 woolhandling tests between the two countries since 1998, New Zealand winning 23 and Australia 8.

The New Zealand team defends its honour again at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March, against a new Australian team chosen from the weekend's Australian championships.

Results of the transtasman tests at the Romney Shears, 160th Warrnambool Agricultural Show, on Saturday, October 26, 2013:

**Shearing (12 sheep):** Australia (Shannon Warnest 18min 6sec, 88.8pts; Robert Glover 19min 48sec, 89.48pts; Justin Dolphin 20min 45sec, 91.75pts) 270.03pts beat New Zealand (John Kirkpatrick 21min 38sec, 97.9pts; Dion Morrell 17min 51sec, 100.47pts; Rowland Smith 21min 50sec, 101.75pts) 300.12pts.

**Woolhandling:** Australia (Angela Wakeley, Kayla Garner) 43.08pts beat New Zealand (Keryn Herbert, Tia Potae) 46.7pts.

### Mission man Cam gets Great Raihania title at last - 26 October, 2013

Man on a mission Cam Ferguson won the Hawke's Bay Show's Great Raihania Shears for the first time on Friday (October 25), completing a treble of wins at three shows in his home province.

On a mission to again win the Golden Shears and World championship he won in 2010, the Waipawa shearer said afterwards it was a proud moment when he added the title in Hastings to his home show Central Hawke's Bay win in Waipukurau and the Wairoa A and P Show ribbon he won last season.

The 30-year-old's win came in the absence of fellow Hawke's Bay stars John Kirkpatrick and Rowland Smith, representing New Zealand in a transtasman test in Australia, while five-times winner Dion King, of Hastings, and King Country icon David Fagan were surprise eliminations in the semi-finals.

But Ferguson was still able to produce a dramatic final, in front of a frenzied crowd of over 400 packing the shearing pavilion at the 150th anniversary show.

He and occasional Open finalist Peter Chilcott, originally from Otorohanga, waged a torrid battle for time honours in the four-man, 20-sheep final, barely a blow separating them as they each finished in 19min 3sec.

The two, who 10 years ago had sheared New Zealand championships honours in Te Kuiti as intermediate and senior winners respectively, were also the two fastest in Friday's heats (with the same time) and semi-finals (separated by just 0.1sec).

In the final both finished more than a sheep ahead of the next man off, Napier-based Northlander Doug Smith, and two sheep ahead of the other finalist, Feilding's Murray Henderson. Ferguson, winner of a second New Zealand Spring Shears title a fortnight earlier in Waimate and then runner-up to Kirkpatrick at the Poverty Bay Show, also produced the best combined board and pen quality and claimed victory by a comfortable 3.1pts.

Masterton-based Riverton shearer Caisey Bailey, 22, a late-bloomer last season when he made three senior finals, including third at the Golden Shears, had his maiden victory by beating former prolific junior and intermediate winner and second-year senior competitor Michael Rolston, of Levin, by more than 4pts in Friday's senior final.

Catherine Mullooly, of Matawai, won the Intermediate final, emulating a feat achieved by fellow female shearer Ingrid Baynes in 2008, and Marley Waihape, of Mataura,



Competitors in the Hawke's Bay Show's first Schools Novice event. At right is winner Whakapunaki Maraki, 14, of Flaxmere College.



It's all flying as Cam Ferguson shears his way to a first victory in the Great Raihania Shears Open final



Monica Potae and Doug Smith in the open woolhandling and shearing semi-finals at Hastings. They each qualified for their

Ingrid Baynes in 2008, and Marley Waihape, of Mataura, won the Junior final, having earlier incurred just two penalties in board judging of his two sheep in the heats.

Monica Potae and Doug Smith in the open woolhandling and shearing semi-finals at Hastings. They each qualified for their separate finals, and each finished 4th.

Flaxmere College student Whakapunaki Maraki, 14, won Hawke's Bay's first novice schools event, held in front of just a few people on the first day of the Show, and repeated the effort in a novice shear in front of the capacity Great Raihania Shears crowd.

Gisborne competitors made a cleansweep of the three woolhandling events, headed by World and Golden Shears champion Joel Henare whose Open final win completed a successful defence of the Poverty Bay-Hawke's Bay double he won last year.

The runner-up was Maryanne Baty, also of Gisborne, in her best result since repeated success two seasons ago when she won the Poverty Bay and Hawke's Bay senior finals.

Foonie Waihape won Friday's senior woolhandling title, in her first final since finishing runner-up in the 2012 Golden Shears, while Vivian Taitapanui scored a maiden victory in the Junior final.

There were 76 shearing entries and 40 in woolhandling classes in the 10th Great Raihania Shears held since a shearing competition was revived at the Hawke's Bay Show in 2004 and named after pioneering shearer Rimitiriu Raihania. At the Hawke's Bay A and P Show in 1902 he won what is thought to have been the first machine-shearing competition in the World.

There are four more North Island competitions before Christmas, with the Wairarapa Spring Shears next Saturday at Careterton, the CHB Shears a week later in Waipukurau, the Stratford A and P Shears on November 23, and the Royal Show Manawatu Shears at Manfeild on December 8. ([See Picture Gallery for more photos](#) from Hastings)

## The old firm back for NZ transtasman shearing tests - 23 October, 2013

Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick moves a step closer to a record-equalling 12th transtasman series test for New Zealand this weekend, reunited with a teammate from his first international 11 years ago.

Kirkpatrick flew to Australia after winning last weekend's Poverty Bay A and P Show Open title and will be joined for Saturday's test in Warrnambool, Vic, by born-again Alexandra finewooled merino shearing supremo Dion Morrell, of Alexandra, and Golden Shears and New Zealand Open champion Rowland Smith, of Hastings.

Kirkpatrick and Morrell were teammates in wins over Australia in Esperance, W.A., and Masterton in 2002-2003, Kirkpatrick being selected after the first of his four Golden Shears Open final victories and Morrell after the last of three wins in the New Zealand Merino Championships.

At 42, Kirkpatrick shears Saturday's test as winner of last season's biggest mixed-breeds competition, the PGG Wrightson National, while Morrell, now 50, surprised even himself when he brushed-off the competition cobwebs and lead New Zealand's unsuccessful attempt to block fourth consecutive merino championships win by Australian Damien Boyle.

In the true spirit of transtasman shearing, Kirkpatrick was this week working with Australian Roger Mifsud near Warrnambool to get his condition and gear ready to improve what has been a transtasman tests career somewhat less successful than his person triumphs of about 200 Open-class wins, including two Warrnambool's Romney Shears Australian Crossbred Championship.

Of his 10 transtasman tests, Kirkpatrick has been in the winning team just four times, and just once in Australia, and four consecutive defeats until New Zealand regained winning form in Masterton last March.

New Zealand holds a slender advantage over the 50 years since the first transtasman test was held at the Golden Shears in Masterton in 1963. It was the only test until a formal home-and-away series started in Euroa in 1974, and with the series abandoned from 1984-1997 because of industrial disputes in Australian woolsheds there've been 55 tests, with New Zealand ahead 29-26.

The presence of Smith, who has also won Warrnambool's crossbreds title, gives New Zealand a strong chance of scoring its first away win since 2010, although facing an uphill battle in the merino section of the contest traditionally dominated by the Australians.

New Zealand will also be out to win a woolhandling test, represented by Te Awamutu's Keryn Herbert, last season's North Island circuit winner and also Shearing Sports New Zealand annual rankings champion, and 2013 Otago Championships New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final winner Tia Potae, of Milton.

Also travelling to Warrnambool is a Te Kuiti New Zealand Shears team of Open-class shearers David Buick, of Pongaroa, and up-and-coming Te Kuiti shearer Mark Grainger, and traveling reserve Digger Balme, of Te Kuiti, as well as New Zealand Championships intermediate winner David Gordon, of Masterton.

Smith, who grew up in Ruawai, will also shear for Northland, joined by Balme, in an annual exchange match against a Warrnambool selection.

The absence of some of the top guns will open some opportunities at Friday's 10th Great Raihania Shears at the 150th anniversary Hawke's Bay Show in Hastings, although transtasman tests record-holder David Fagan, of Te Kuiti, will be on hand as he and son and first-year Open competitor Jack try to reach a final together in New Zealand for the first time. Among the opposition will be Waipawa shearer and 2010 Golden Shears World Champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, and possibly 2006 Golden Shears champion Dion King, of Hastings, a five-times winner of his home-town's big event.

## Spring in Kirky's step at Gisborne shears - 21 October, 2013

Prolific Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick got his season off to its earliest winning start in four years when he won the Poverty Bay Shears in Gisborne on Saturday.

Kirkpatrick, who last won the Poverty Bay title in 2009 and was runner-up last year to Hastings shearer Dion King, produced a timely first-to-finish win ahead of next Saturday's 2013-2014

Transtasman series opener against Australia in Warrnambool, Vic., where he also defends the Romney Shears Australian crossbred title he won last year.

Second at Gisborne, the first Shearing Sports New Zealand North Island competition of the new season, was fellow Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson, who won last weekend's New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate, with King Country veteran David Fagan third and Gisborne shearer and 2010 Golden Shears Senior champion Tama Niania.

King, going for a third Poverty Bay Shears title in a row, was eliminated in the semi-finals, while among those eliminated in the heats was 2012 Senior winner Jack Fagan, making his debut in New Zealand Open-class competition, in which his father's all-conquering career at the top level began in 1981.

Kirkpatrick shorn the 20 sheep in 16min 26sec, 20 seconds ahead of Niania, who just pipped Fagan. Ferguson was last to finish, but had the best quality both on the board and in the pens and ultimately missed the top prize by just half-a-point.

Fagan was otherwise in all-conquering form in three show-weekend speedshears, with a cleansweep of the show's own shears prelude on Friday afternoon, another victory at a Gisborne city bar on Friday night, and the third triumph at Pututahi on Saturday night.

In other shearing events at the Show on Saturday, Masterton teenager David Gordon, who won 16 Intermediate finals throughout the country last season, had his maiden Senior win.

Wairoa shearer Adam Morton won his second Poverty Bay Intermediate title, having beaten Gordon in the event's final last year, and Shaun Turton, of Dannevirke, had his first win in a close Juniro final.

In the woolhandling events reigning World and Golden Shears champion Joel Henare, now in his eighth season in the top class, successfully defended his home town's Open title he won for the first time 12 months ago. His last win at Gisborne was in the Senior final in 2006.

#### Coster wins as Open shearing returns to Ellesmere show

New Zealand representative Tony Coster celebrated Open-class shearing's return to the Ellesmere A and P Show in Canterbury with his fourth win in the event.

There was no Open event last season when a rain-affected show clashed with the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate and Coster had previously won the title in 1998, 2008 and 2009.

Saturday provided yet another quinella with fellow Rakaia shearer and former New Zealand representative Grant Smith.

Both were, however, beaten in the race for time honours by Ashburton shearer Rocky Bull, one of a group of seven shearers getting together to mark the swansong of Rakaia shearer and judge John Hough, who aims to contest 21 competitions in his "Last Stand" season.

Hough - "not 70 yet" - first competed in Open-class shearing 40 years ago, a Southland shearer "so disgusted" with his one and only Senior performance it was about three seasons before he decided to give it a go again.

While never reaching a Golden Shears Open final, he was accorded Master Shearer status in 1986 and featured in a World three-stand ewe-shearing record in 1989. He has been a New Zealand team manager and was a judge at the 2008 World Championships in Norway.

The chairman of Shearing Sports New Zealand's South Island committee, he decided earlier this year that this season would be his last as an official, spurning the idea of having one last blow-out in competition.

"I was just going to do it by myself," he said, but it soon attracted the attention of fellow seasoned South Island shearers Gavin Rowland (the chairman of Shearing Sports New Zealand), Tom Wilson (a Darfield-based Scotsman and 1984 World champion), contractor and show commentator Norm Harraway, Rocky Bull, Robert McLaren and John Fraser.

He's shorn all three South Island competitions to date this season, at Alexandra, Waimate and on Saturday, and says all seven plan to travel north for the Golden Shears in March, and three competitions the previous weekend, and for the New Zealand championships in Te Kuiti, where they've booked a corporate table.

Two "cockies" are helping with petrol, and a wool company is providing the use of a van for the road trips, taking some of the worry off Hough who commented after the day at Leeston: "I didn't go that well. I should be coming right by the end."

Rare competitor Jock Barrett, currently based in Rakaia, won the Senior final, and Irish shearer Joseph Stephens backed-up from victory a week earlier at Waimate by winning the Intermediate final.

Follow results on the Competition Results page via Menu, or the Breaking News page

### Ferguson bags second Spring Shears title - October 14, 2013

Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson returned triumphantly to the scene of one of his most important previous wins when he claimed a second New Zealand Spring Shears Open title in Waimate on Saturday.

It was in 2009 that Ferguson won the title for the first time, his biggest of 5 Open-class wins at the time and the kick-start to a season which included winning the Golden Shears Open in Masterton and a ticket to Wales where he became the 2010 World Champion.

Just as in Waimate and Wales four years ago, the runner-up was Te Kuiti's David Fagan, multiple winner of all of the major events in an Open-class career now in its 33rd season.

Ferguson grasped the opportunity with fastest time in the the 6-man final over 16 full-wooled ewes, shorn in a quick 16min 51sec. It was almost 10 seconds quicker than 2012 winner and Southland veteran Darin Forde, with Fagan next to finish a further 4 seconds in arrears. Carding the second-best combined board and pen quality points, Ferguson claimed the win by 1.612pts from Fagan.

For Ferguson, from Waipawa and now working mainly for Dannevirke enterprise Paewai Mullins, it was the work of a man on a mission.

Having been beaten by New Zealand-based Scotsman Gavin Mutch in the 2012 World final in Masterton, Ferguson has his heart set on winning the Golden Shears or New Zealand Open titles this season and the chance to win back the big title in Ireland next May.

He revealed his goal earlier this month in a shearing demonstration and pep talk for youngsters in Waipukurau at the Ross Shield Hawke's Bay Primary Schools rugby tournament, in which he had played about 18 years ago.

Now 30, he said after the Waimate win that "staying home" for a year - as in not travelling too far to shear - coupled with taking the advice of partner Teresa Hall's midwife and roping-in a Dunedin specialist to deal-to his back problems, had put him in a good space to tackle the season. He wasn't too chuffed by the way things were going in the heats and semi-final on Saturday, but a switch to combs he used in also winning 2 speedshears on the short trip south did the trick.

"The final was sort of a dream shear, really," he said.



Creedence Culshaw, of Raupunga, wins her first title, in the Spring Shears Junior final at Waimate



Juliette Lyon, of Alexandra, finally wins the Waimate Senior woolhandling final



Mataura shearer Jake Rangiuia wins his first Senior title

PHOTO/Barbara Newton

He hadn't been to Alexandra for the merinos the previous week, but plans to follow the shows through the season, including Poverty Bay this week and the Great Raihania Shears at the 150th Hawke's Bay Show the following Friday.

As well as the enduring form of David Fagan, Ferguson on Saturday had to also overcome the claims of Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford, winner of the Waimate title 6 times from 2001-2008.

One of 36 in the Open class, Stratford was top qualifier in the heats and semi-finals, but while producing the best quality in the final he was unable to keep-up with the pace and claimed 3rd place, while Forde, scoring poorly in the pen judging, had to settle for 4th.

Mataura shearer Jake Rangiuiaia, who in 2009 became the third Rangiuiaia brother to win the Golden Shears, shorn 8 sheep in just over 11 minutes to win his first Senior title by 1.373pts from 2012-2013 season Shearing Sports New Zealand intermediate rankings runner-up Ethan Pankhurst, of Masterton.

Irish shearer Joseph Stephens, from Tuam, County Galway, scored his biggest win in New Zealand with victory in the season's first Intermediate final, having had one win in the grade last season, at the Marlborough Show. Lionel Taumata had his first Junior win, having shorn 4 finals last year for a best result of 3rd at the Southern Shears in home-town Gore.

The Open woolhandling final had a rare result, repeating the top-3 placings of last year's event. In an all-North Island final, Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, retained the title, with Dannevirke's Rocky Hape-Taite also repeating his second placing of the previous week's season opening Merino championships in Alexandra, and Tina Rimene, of Masterton taking 3rd place.

It was a good return to winning form for Herbert, the now 3-times Open rankings winner who on October 26 competes for New Zealand in a transtasman woolhandling test in Warrnambool, Vic. Juliette Lyon, of Alexandra, won the Senior woolhandling final, after being runner-up last year, 3rd in 2011, and 3rd in the Junior final in 2010, third in the Waimate junior final in 2010, and third in the Senior final in 2011 and runner-up last year, finally claimed the winner's ribbon.

The Junior woolhandling provide a maiden win for Creedence Culshaw, of Raupunga, in Northern Hawke's Bay. She had been runner-up at Alexandra.

Mike McConnell, of Albury, made a good start to his bid to represent New Zealand at a second World championships by winning the first blades shearing final of the season, with 2005 representative Shane Casserly returning to competition to finish second.

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## Morrell confirms return to Kiwi shearing team - October 9, 2013

Finewool shearing legend Dion Morrell has confirmed he will accept a place in the New Zealand shearing team for this summer's Transtasman tests after a surprise but emotional comeback for second place at the New Zealand Merino championships.

Morrell won the place in the team with the first test just 3 weeks away by being the best New Zealander in the Alexandra final on Saturday, as West Australian shearer Damien Boyle won the title for a fourth year in a row.

Morrell wondered whether he was up to it, having at the age of 50 long-since given-up the toil of everyday shearing to concentrate on his shearing contracting business.

"I don't think 2-3 days' shearing a year makes a shearer," he said. "I'm a contractor now, not a shearer."

A member of the Merino championships organising committee, he'd given up regular competition shearing 10 years ago after he last represented New Zealand, and only entered his home event when he was worried several weeks ago about the number of entries.

"This is our local show and entries were looking a bit light," he said. "Then things just took off. The entries were good."

His major preparation was shearing about 25 sheep at controlled pace doing the woolhandling competition heats on Friday. After graduating through the shearing heats, quarterfinals and semi-finals the next day he found himself in the top 6 for the final, and in two minds about how to do it.

That's when he thought of mate and fellow World shearing record holder Ricky Pivac, who died in a motorbike crash in Australia on September 10.

Despite having to travel almost the length of the country, Morrell attended the tangi near Kaitaia, and on Saturday thought to himself: "It's his birthday tomorrow. What would Ricky do if he was in this position?"

With an early significant blemish, Morrell had to go for time, and even though he was first to finish the 12 sheep, more than a sheep ahead of the next-quickest, he was surprised to learn soon afterwards he'd done enough to get into the major money.

Morrell joins Golden Shears Open champion Rowland Smith and PGG Wrightson National series winner John Kirkpatrick, both of Hawke's Bay, in the New Zealand team for tests at Warrnambool, Vic, on October 26 and at



Photo by Barbara Newton



Photo by Barbara Newton

PHOTO/Barbara Newton

team for tests at Warrnambool, Vic, on October 26 and at the Golden Shears in Masterton on March 1. There will also be woolhandling tests, with New Zealand represented by Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Tia Potae, of Milton.

## Early days but rankings history beckons for wool champ Ruki - October 8, 2013

It's early days and there's a lot of wool to pass across the table, but Invercargill woolhandler Amy Ruki could be facing a bit of shearing sports history in the wake of her breakthrough Open-class win at the New Zealand Merino Championships in Alexandra on Saturday. Having been Shearing Sports New Zealand's No 1 ranked Junior for the 2008-2009 season and the top Senior the following year, the 26-year-old mum of 2 young children has the chance whether this season or in the future to become the first person to win the honour in all three woolhandling classes.

The demands of raising the family along with the distances she'll need to travel may be as big a challenge as the class of the opposition, but she confirmed she'll be giving it her best shot again when the New Zealand Spring Shears are held at Waimate on Friday and Saturday, and at the Canterbury Show's New Zealand Corriedale Championships next month. They've been happy hunting-grounds in the past, with Junior titles at both shows in 2008, and placings in both Senior finals the following season.

Her Open debut in 2010 was promising enough, reaching the final at Alexandra and finishing 4th behind Taiwha Nelson, eventual World and Golden Shears champion Joel Henare and multiple Golden Shears and World champion Joanne Kumeroa.

But a maiden Open win was much longer coming, a reflection most on the strength of the opposition as she was up against-it even trying to reach the finals.

Of the 71 Open woolhandling titles in New Zealand in her first 3 seasons in the top grade, 59 were shared among just 5 competitors, headed by now 3-times rankings winner and Te Awamutu woolhandler Keryn Herbert, with 16, and Henare, with 15.

All the guns were left behind as Ruki made her way from the heats of 52 competitors at the weekend to what seemed much a new-era final.

Kumeroa, having flown-in from Australia, was eliminated



Photo by Barbara Newton



in the heats, while Herbert and Henare departed in the quarterfinals, leaving Ruki to ultimately fight-out the final with 2012-2013 Transtasman New Zealand team member Rocky Hape-Taite, of Dannevirke, first time open finalist Sarah Kara, of Winton, and Kaitangata-based Ratapu Moore, originally from Northland and whose husband, Angus, shone in the Open shearing final.



AMY RUKI, 2013 New Zealand Merino Championships Open woolhandling winner.

PHOTO/Barbara Newton

Ruki says that with the demands of raising the young ones, the obstacle of distance, and with partner Mike Ferguson shearing in Australia for a few weeks, she's unlikely to be competing in the North Island before the end of the year, and possibly not before the "Goldies" in Masterton in March.

She's been woolhandling about 8 years, and in the environment of contractors Peter and Elsie Lyon in Alexandra it was inevitable she would soon be testing her skills in competition. "Everyone here at Peter Lyon's does it," she said. "I started enjoying it." She'd prepared well for the Merino championships, and said: "I've worked hard all pre-lamb, and this is a really good show."

### Boy o Boyle dinkum joy as Aussie wins shears again - October 6, 2013

West Australian shearer Damien Boyle has again shut-out the best Kiwi finewool shearers to win the New Zealand Merino Championships open title for a fourth consecutive time.

Boyle won a 12-sheep final in Alexandra yesterday, with a huge margin of more than 15 points over runner-up and veteran New Zealand finewool supremo Dion Morrell, an Alexandra contractor who won the title 3 times from 1996 to 2002.

It was easily the biggest winning margin since Broomehill-based Boyle, now 37, began his winning sequence in 2010 and possibly the biggest in the history of the event, which was first held in 1962.

Morrell, 50, made a stern bid to wrestle back some Kiwi pride in the season-opener and only finewool event on the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar by finishing more than a sheep ahead of anyone else in the 6-man showdown, shearing the event in 21min 38.49sec, 1min 55sec ahead of next-man-off Charlie O'Neill, also of Alexandra.



Te Atakura (Tuts) Crawford, after her win in the Senior final at the New Zealand Merino Championships in Alexandra, on October 6.

PHOTO/Barbara Newton

But while scoring well in judging on the shearing board, Morrell had one of his worst results in the pens, where Boyle was able to haul back the deficit with easily the best quality points. While missing out on the major prize, Morrell won a place in the Transtasman series, set to join Golden Shears champion Rowland Smith and PGG Wrightson National Series champion John Kirkpatrick for tests against Australia in Warrnambool, Vic, later this month and at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

A veteran of 2 transtasman tests in Esperance, W.A. in 2002 and Masterton in 2003, he was note immediately sure he would take up the opportunity again, professing to not being particularly shearing-fit and not wanting to let the team down.

King Country icon David Fagan got his 33rd season of Open-class shearing off to a great start when he headed the 24 qualifiers from the heats to the quarterfinals, claiming the maximum 12pt start in the first round of 5 rounds in the PGG Wrightson National, incorporating the McSkimming Memorial Triple Crown, which he won 9 times from 1986 to 2008.

But he failed to get past the next stage, as did Invercargill shearer and 2-times Alexandra winner Nathan Stratford, only the second time he's missed out on a place in the final in 12 years.

The Kiwi honour in the finewool craft was restored when Rakaiha shearer Tony Coster and Chris Vickers, of Palmerston, beat the Royal Perth Show team of Boyle and Mark Buscomb comfortably in a 5-sheep invitation event.

Diminutive East Coast shearer Te Atakura Crawford had easily the best win of her career and one of the biggest shearing competition triumphs ever by a woman in winning the Senior final.

Jills Angus Burney, 1985 winner and the only female to previously claim a Merino shears shearing title in Alexandra, was present for the win which surprised even the 26-year-old Crawford who, having flown in especially for the event, was soon afterwards on one of the first flights available back to Australia where she works.

Shearing merinos with a cover comb for the first time, she nailed a major boilover for, although having good experience shearing in the UK and Australia, she didn't shear in any final in New Zealand last summer. The previous year she was 6th in the Golden Shears Senior final.

But friends says she's worked hard for it, deserved it, and there's more to come.

In woolhandling events, Warrnambool-bound New Zealand team members Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Tia Potae, of Milton, both failed to reach the Open final.

It was a triumph for Amy Ruki, of Invercargill, scoring her first win since heading the Senior rankings in 2010.

Kyle Wihongi, of Hastings and having not won since the 2011 Spring Shears in Waimate, beat 3 fellow North Islanders in the Senior woolhandling final, and there was hometown success in the Junior final with a debut victory to Ruby O'Neill.