

Kirkpatrick's shear revenge - October 31, 2009

A shortage of work in a new shearing season couldn't stop Napier gun John Kirkpatrick as he struck back with a vengeance today (Saturday October 31) to win the Wairarapa Spring Shears Open title at Clareville, near Carterton.

Kirkpatrick was a shock early elimination when he failed to make the final of the event when it was revived last year, and suffered a similar demise last week at his home Great Raihania Shears in Hastings.

Today, in a four-man final, he polished-off 13 sheep in 11min 58sec, half-a-minute quicker than the second man off the board, and when all points were counted he finished with a commanding winning margin of more than four points over runner-up and fellow Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa.

Kirkpatrick, the current New Zealand open champion and winner of the opening North Island competition of the season at the Poverty Bay show a fortnight ago, said he hadn't had a full day's shearing since works-hoggets shearing following his return from a national team tour in Britain in July, and with wet weather in Hawke's Bay managed only two days in the woolshed in the last week, at Otupae, about 1hr 40mins from home on the Napier-Taihape road.

Rain on the East Coast almost caused a cancellation of today's show, with the hoggets prepared for the show spending at least three days under cover, but organisers' faith was rewarded with an ultimately fine afternoon, and Kirkpatrick said the sheep were surprisingly good "combing." Reigning Golden shears woolhandling champion Tina Rimene, of Masterton, had a family day of it in winning the open woolhandling final, soon after daughter Larnie Morrell had won the senior title, while some verstaillity was shown by Cushla Gordon, of Masterton, who won the junior shearing title and finished third in the junior woolhandling final.

A surprise elimination in the heats of the open woolhandling heats was New Zealand representative Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu.

Gisborne shearer Wi Poutu Ngarangione continued an unbeaten run in intermediate events this season, adding the Wairarapa title to those he had won at Gisborne and Hastings.

Cummings going places as shearing career gets new lift - October 26, 2009

South Canterbury shearer Eli Cummings was really going places when he scored a rare open competition win with a surprise victory over PGG Wrightson National champion Tony Coster at the Northern Canterbury Shears in Rangiora on Saturday.

Less than 24 hours later, the 33-year-old Pleasant Point gun was on a flight to Melbourne, en route for several weeks' work around Hamilton, Victoria, three competitions in the region, and then a return to New Zealand to start preparing for a possible World record tally bid early in the New Year.

The winner of just four titles at smaller competitions in about seven seasons of open-class shearing, Cummings was only third off the board in Saturday's four-man final, 42 seconds behind Christchurch-based World eight-hour lambshearing record holder Ivan Scott, of Northern Ireland, who was quickest through the 10 sheep in 12min 31 sec.

But he produced easily the best finished job, and took the money with time and quality points totaling 61.75, and a margin of almost two-and-a-half points to the Rakaia gun Coster, who won his national

title at the Golden Shears in Masterton last March. Third was Dave Brooker, of Hawarden, while Scott was relegated to fourth.

Cummings said he thought as he came off the board that he had only done enough for third. Coster had recently competed for New Zealand in a transtasman test in Australia, while Scott represented his country at the World championships in Norway a year ago.

"I was surprised, I was shocked," Cummings said from Australia. "I didn't really know what to say in my speech - I hadn't prepared for it."

His last open win was in Australia a year ago, and he's hoping Saturday's win is a pointer to some success in competitions over the next three weeks at Warrnambool, Coleraine and Hamilton. While there is nothing firm about a record bid yet, Cummings shored 703 bellied ewes in nine hours two summers ago in what was a successful test-run to see if he could get himself fit enough.

"I was only aiming for 600," he said. "But the fuys said at lunch I only had to be a second quicker per sheep and I'd get 700."

He's been in focused training for 6-7 weeks and plans to return to New Zealand about November 20, possibly missing the rich Kangaroo Island Speedshear in South Australia, to head to Hawke's Bay to work with Porangahau shearer and World nine-hour ewes record holder and former nine-hour lambs record holder Rodney Sutton.

He expects to miss the remaining pre-Christmas competitions in the South Island at Ashburton next Saturday, Pleasant Point and Marlborough on November 7, the national corriedale championships at the Royal New Zealand Show in Christchurch on November 11-13, the West Otago Shears on November 21, and the Nelson Shears and Top of the South Finals on the same weekend.

The remaining North Island shows before the busy pre-Christmas shed shearing season in December are the Wairarapa Show at Carterton next Saturday, the Manawatu show at Manfeild on November 7, the CHB Shears in Waipukurau on November 14, and the Stratford shears on November 28.

It's all for the camaraderie says shear champion Fagan - October 25, 2009

The thrills of competition shearing remain as constant as ever for 48-year-old shearing icon David Fagan who on Friday (October 23) won the Great Raihania Shears open title in Hastings, his first win in the 28th season of a career which has produced 593 victories around the World.

But, armed with a \$1000 winner's cheque to more than cover the costs of a seven-hour return trip by road from hometown Te Kuiti with regular travelling companion and eventual third-placegetter Dean Ball, Fagan said it's not the money that keeps him going.

"I don't know," he said during a Labour Weekend break in Whangamata, when asked if the current season could be his last on the competition circuit. "While I'm still enjoying it, I'll still be doing it."

"Travelling with the guys is part of the camaraderie," he said.

"If you were travelling on your own all the time, you probably wouldn't bother. It makes it a cheap weekend away if you're all sharing the costs, and the prizes.....? That's a bonus."

"There's a great life out there for younger guys, opportunities to travel, overseas, see the World, and if you use your money properly."

Despite the wins having not been as regular as at some stages of his illustrious career, there's no sign of any let-up in the Fagan itinerary, in which he flies to Australia on Thursday with five others chosen

from finals at the New Zealand championships in April to compete at the Warrnambool Shears, part of an exchange between the two competitions which started after he and brother John made their first visit to the Australian show 20 years ago.

Returning the day after the crossbred shearing and woolhanding championships end on Saturday, Fagan will later in the week fly to the South Island to compete in a fundraising speedshear in South Canterbury, and make a first-ever appearance in the Pleasant Point Shears. He will then return to Te Kuiti, but fly south again for the NZ Corriedale championships at the Royal New Zealand Show in Christchurch on November 11-13, the third leg of the PGG Wrihston National Round.

After indicating last year that he would be cutting-back on the competition, he still reached 16 finals in shows from Balclutha to Auckland, winning the Rangitikei Shears in Marton and his 16th Golden Shears open title in Masterton in March, after which he still found time for six more competitions, qualifying for all eight possible finals and being runner-up four times.

He then spent several weeks in Britain accompanying the New Zealand team of nephew James Fagan and Hawke's Bay star John Kirkpatrick, winning two more titles at the historic Glenarm Castle in Northern Ireland and the Great Yorkshire Open in England, just 24 hours apart in July.

Rarely one to speak of his goals, leaving the talk to his tall frame and the Viper handpiece, Bullet cutters and Mustang comb he has helped develop in Sydney for gear-makers Supershear, Fagan has, however, made no secret of the incentive to follow the competitions this season, reaching finals in successive weeks at Alexandra, Waimate, Gisborne and Friday's contest at the Hawke's Bay Show.

The winners of the 50th Golden Shears Open on March 6 and the New Zealand Open four weeks later will represent New Zealand at the 14th Golden Shears World shearing and woolhanding championships, increasing interest in doing the competition-miles needed to be competitive in the glamour events.

"That's everyone's goal," said Fagan, who won the World title in 1988, 1992, 1996, 1998 and 2003, and who has six other World titles in the teams event.

"We'll take one week at a time, but at the end, I'll just want to know I've given it my best shot."

The Hastings competition attracted 28 open class shearers, a record since it was resurrected in 2004 to commemorate a victory by Ngati Porou gun Rimitiriu Raihania in the World's first machine-shearing competition at the Hawke's Bay show in 1902.

But it was a tough day with the seasonal conditions reflected in the times for one of the slowest crossbred sheep competitions in the country the last decade, and the difficulty many shearers had meeting tougher quality standards.

Globetrotting Matt Smith, from Ruawai in the Far North and having recently returned from shearing the Slovenia and Estonia regions, made the pace throughout and took 19min 6 sec, to beat the other three finalists by at least half a sheep, but was relegated to fourth place on points, opening the way for Fagan's win by more than six points over runner-up and last-man-off David Buick, of Pongaroa. Ball had to settle for third place, while reigning champion Kirkpatrick and fellow Hawke's Bay hope Cam Ferguson, who scored his first major open win in Waimate a fortnight ago, were eliminated in the semi-finals, all with rare failures to match the quality mark.

Gisborne teenager Joel Henare won the open woolhanding title, a crucial longwool show victory and 15th open class title in trying to become the youngest person to be awarded Master Woolhandler status by Shearing Sports New Zealand. World champion and country school principal Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, was third, but former three-times World champion Joanne Kumeroa, of Wanganui, failed to reach the final of her last event before a three-week return to her base in Hamilton, Victoria, after which she be back in New Zealand to compete in Christchurch.

Rain in cow country puts hold on shear team reunion - October 21, 2009

Wet weather in Taranaki seems almost certain to stop World champion shearer Paul Avery making his new season's debut in Hastings on Friday at what would otherwise have been the first gathering of New Zealand's four World shearing and woolhandling title-holders since their triumphs in Norway 12 months ago.

Avery said from his farm at Toko, near Stratford, that without any shearing because of the wet weather which has dogged his area he won't be making the trip to the Great Raihania Shears at the Hawke's Bay Show.

But World teams championship-winning partner John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, and woolhandling champions Sheer Alabaster, of Taihape, and Joanne Kumeroa, of Wanganui, will be there. The four have not been together at any one event since starting their separate journeys home in the hours after winning their titles in Bjerkreim on October 5 last year, with Kumeroa having been based in Australia till returning to New Zealand this season with a goal of making the New Zealand team again for next July's world championships in Wales, her own tribute to longtime friend and champion woolhandler Gina Nathan who died earlier this year.

Avery said that without the practice and fitness he "wouldn't be able to compete," and the lack of shearing has him also doubting his ability to perform a week later when he shears in Warrnambool, Victoria, with a team chosen from the New Zealand championships in Te Kuiti last April.

"I wouldn't have shorn a thousand sheep since last April, and it's a long way to go to get your arse kicked," he said.

All three of his teammates will be hoping to extend early-season good form in Hastings, with both Kirkpatrick and Alabaster having won at the Poverty Bay Show last Saturday.

Alabaster, principal of a tiny country school near Taihape, was ecstatic over her success.

Also unable to get significant practice in before the event, she had set only a goal to reach the top eight for the semi-final of the event which was the first in a North Island Circuit from which the top four woolhandlers will compete against the top four in the south in a World Championships selection trial in Masterton in March.

Kirkpatrick is expected to have veteran five-times champion David Fagan among his opposition on Friday. Having not won in New Zealand since scoring his Golden Shears open title in Masterton seven months ago, Fagan has been runner-up at his last two outings, in Waimate and Gisborne.

School teacher shows class in wool contest - October 17, 2009

Country school principal Sheree Alabaster made a confident start in her bid to defend her World woolhandling title by beating a high-quality field at her first competition of the season in Gisborne on Saturday.

The Taihape sportswoman went into the show with almost no practice, but still did enough to sneak victory in the Poverty Bay Show final by beating teenaged home-town hero and No 1-ranked 2008-2009 woolhandler Joel Henare, who was second, and former three-times World champion Joanne Kumeroa, of Wanganui, who was third..

Both Henare and Kumeroa had got their season's underway with victories in the South Island, Henare winning the Waitaki McKenzie open title before heading to Australia for a transtasman test-match victory in Northwest New South Wales last week, when Kumeroa was busy winning the New Zealand Spring Shears title in Waimate.

Saturday's competition was the first on the North Island Circuit, from which the top four will compete against the top four from the South Island circuit at the Golden shears in Masterton in March to find New Zealand's two woolhandling representatives for the next World championships in Wales next July.

Prolific winner and World teams champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, won the open shearing final in Gisborne, despite being just beaten in the race for time-honours by five-times World champion David Fagan, of Te Kuiti.

Having turned 48 last week, and riding high with a 16th Golden Shears open title last March, Fagan managed to clear his pen of 15 sheep in 13min 12sec, but his bid to move a win closer to victory number 600 in a career spanning more than 27 seasons, was put on hold for another week as he succumbed to Kirkpatrick's better quality on the day, and had to settle for being runner-up for the second time in a week, but by a margin of just 0.816pts.

Among those who failed to qualify for the four-man final, from a starting lineup of 19, were Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson, who had beaten Fagan in Waimate seven days earlier, and 2009 Golden Shears open finalists Dean Ball, of Te Kuiti, Jerome McRea, of Wanganui, and Whangamomona farmer and Scottish international Gavin Mutch.

Their elimination opened the way for local inclusion in the final, including Kirkpatrick's brother, Ian, whose own son was eliminated in the semi-finals.

All are in the early stages of a buildup to the Golden Shears and the New Zealand Championships, the winner of which will form the two-man machine shearing team for the World championships.

Taranaki farmer Paul Avery, who won the World individual title a year ago and paired with Kirkpatrick to take the teams title, hopes to make his season's debut at the Great Raihania Shears in Hastings on Friday.

In other events, Gisborne shearer Shelford Wilcox relished the local conditions to beat hot-favourite and top 2008-2009 intermediate Tipene Te Whata, of Northland, in the senior final, while Invercargill woolhandler Amy Ruki, the top-ranked junior in the country last season, improved on two finals placings in the new season's southern competitions to win the senior woolhandling title.

Fagan and McRea did however feature among the winner's in a three show Speedshear circuit surrounding the annual show. While the show's own speedshear was won by Nuhaka gun Deano Smith on Friday, Fagan won that night at Patutahi and McRea won on Saturday night at Te Karaka.

[Click here to view the competition results](#) from the Poverty Bay A&P Show Shears at Gisborne on Saturday (October 18)

Woolhandlers rock those Aussies - again! - October 12, 2009

New Zealand's dominance of trans-tasman woolhandling continued with an eighth consecutive test win in the annual home and away series during the Australian National shearing and woolhandling championships in the tiny Northwest New South Wales town of Warialda on Saturday.

The win by Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Gisborne teenager Joel Henare, part of a flying trip by a seven-strong Shearing Sports New Zealand team, was also New Zealand's fourth consecutive trans-tasman woolhandling away victory win in a row. New Zealand's last defeat in a woolhandling test in Australia was in Millicent, South Australia, in November 2005.

It provided some consolation for New Zealand's defeat in the machine shearing test, in which 2009 PGG Wrightson National Round winner Tony Coster, of Rakaia, and teammates Dean Ball, of Te Kuiti, and late selection Charlie O'Neill, of Alexandra, suffered the same fate as every other New Zealand

team in the Australian leg of the annual home-and-away tests since the Kiwis' last away win in Esperance, West Australia, in October 2002, and were beaten by a strong Australian side in a contest over eight merino wethers and eight crossbreds.

Coster and O'Neill did however enjoy some success when they teamed with pick-up senior class shearer Aaron Haynes, of Feilding, and Herbert and Henare to win a shearing and woolhandling teams event against other state teams.

New Zealand also dominated the blade shearing events, with Noel Handley, of Rangiora, and John Kennedy, of Timaru, beating an Australian invitation team in an unofficial test. Kennedy then won the Australian championships final, with Handley placed third.

Southern hope taken-out by northern raider - October 11, 2009

A Southland shearers' hopes of taking an unprecedented third successive win in three shows at the start of the new Shearing Sports New Zealand season came to grief when northern raider Cam Ferguson caused a boilover in the New Zealand Spring Shearing Championship in Waimate on Saturday.

Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, had won both the Waitaki-McKenzie title in Omarama and the New Zealand merino championship in Alexandra in the previous fortnight, and was first off the board in Saturday's six-man final over 16 sheep.

While the big threat seemed to be King Country shearing legend David Fagan, who was top qualifier in both the heats and the semi-finals just a week out from his 48th birthday, the top honours went to comparative spring chicken and Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson, who at the age of 26 scored the biggest of five wins in his open-class career by finishing just two seconds behind Stratford and claiming the spoils with the better quality points.

He finished with a 1.4pt buffer to Fagan, New Zealand Champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier was third, and Stratford slipped to fourth.

The heats doubled as the second leg of the PGG Wrightson National Round, a five-show series leading to a final at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March, with a year's user of a Hyundai Santa Fe to the winner.

Meanwhile, Far North teenager Tipene Te Whata, the top-ranked intermediate shearer in New Zealand last season, claimed his second win in three senior shows this season, having been victorious at Omarama a fortnight ago and third behind two Australians in Alexandra last week.

Australia-based Wanganui former three-times World Champion woolhandler Joanne Kumeroa claimed the open woolhandling title, her first win in New Zealand since the 2007-2008 season. The runner-up was Angelique Gage, of Christchurch, and their performances came in the absence of Omarama winner Joel Henare who was in Australia for a transtrasman test match and Alexandra winner Tina Rimene, who did not compete.

Rain just a bit of a pain as Waimate gears for NZ Spring Shears - October 8, 2009

Rain in South Canterbury was just a bit of a pain and a bit of extra work as organisers of the New Zealand Spring Shearing Championships prepared for their big event in Waimate this weekend.

Organising committee president Warren White said more than 1300 mainly-romney sheep were put under cover yesterday, and today committee members were out making sure all were in the best shape

for a speedshear tonight (October 9), and a 15-hour programme of heats, semi-finals and finals tomorrow (October 10), starting at 7.30am and not expected to finish before 10.30pm.

Where show organisers would prefer to take the sheep from one property to guarantee consistency, changing times in the farm scene are limiting the flocks, with no more than 300 available from any one property for the Waimate championships, some having to be trucked for up to three-quarters of an hour to get to the stadium where the events will be held.

After two merino competitions in Otago, the third show of more than 60 in the new Shearing Sports New Zealand season is the first to encompass all four machine shearing classes, one blade shearing class, and all three woolhandling classes, and Mr White promised the best sheep would be left for last.

"They will be really good shearing by the open shearing final," he said.

The championships have attracted most of New Zealand's top shearers and woolhandlers, the notable absentees being World shearing champion and Taranaki farmer Paul Avery who will make his season's debut in the Great Raihania Shears at the Hawke's Bay Show on October 23, and World woolhandling champion Taihape country schoolteacher Sheree Alabaster who will appear for the first time at the Poverty Bay Show next week.

Also missing are Tony Coster, Dean Ball and Charlie O'Neill, and woolhandlers Joel Henare and Keryn Herbert, the five members of the New Zealand shearing and woolhandling team in Australia for tests in Warialda, northwest NSW, in the first leg of an annual home-and-away trans-tasman series.

But among those present will be Invercargill gun Nathan Stratford, trying to make it three-from-three after winning the two previous events of the season at Omarama and Alexandra in the last fortnight. Also on the shearing board will be King Country shearing icon David Fagan, who turns 48 at the end of next week, and No 1 ranked Kiwi and Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick. Three times World champion woolhandler Joanne Kumeroa, of Wanganui, will be trying to get her first win in three attempts since returning from her base in Australia.

Waimate is the second stage of the five-show PGG Wrightson National Round open class qualifying series, and the next in what is becoming a highly competitive series among open class woolhandlers to select two representatives to go to Wales next July to defend two World titles won in Norway 12 months ago.

Blades cut new track as Kiwi shears team heads for Aussie - October 6, 2009

The slowly dying art and culture of blade shearing in New Zealand has been given a fillip with the departure of two of its less than 100 exponents for Australia today to join the national shearing and woolhandling teams for the first leg of an annual home-and-away trans-tasman test series.

Canterbury veterans Noel Handley and John Kennedy flew out of Christchurch, scheduled to join three machine shearers and two woolhandlers in Coolangatta to complete the trip to Warialda, about 600km Sydney and in Northwest New South Wales, where the tests will be held during the Australian National Championships on Saturday.

Handley, from Rangiora, and Kennedy, from Timaru, are to compete in the Australian blades championships and an invitation match against two Australian blade shearers, in what they hope is a prelude to eventual recognition of such matches as official tests.

It is expected at least two Australians will compete in the blades championship at the Christchurch Show in November, and planners of the 50th anniversary Golden Shears in Masterton in March are also hoping to attract at least 12 scissormen for the first blade competition at the famed carnival for many years, albeit well out of season. It is expected to be an important event in the selection of New Zealand's blade shearers for next year's World championships in Wales.

Handley said that with dwindling sheep numbers, and none of the old problems with power supply, the blade shearing flock is dwindling, culling the season to a July-October period, where only a few seasons ago it stretched at least into November. Blades are used mainly to leave a protective cover on the sheep, including grease and up to 2cm of wool, and he estimated there are no more than 50 blade shearers tallying 120 to 200 a day, mainly as a part-time or seasonal career built around other employment such as jobs in the freezing works.

Handley, who shored for 22 years but is now employed as an instructor with industry trainers Tectra, has competed previously at World Championships in South Africa and Ireland, but only in demonstration in Australia, while Kennedy competed successfully in Australia a year ago.

The machine shearing team has plenty to aim for on its trip, with new national representative Chasrlie O'Neill, of Alexandra, joining PGG Wrightson National series champion Tony Coster, of Rakaia, and King Country veteran Dean Ball in a bid to make-up for New Zealand's defeat in Australia last year, although black-singlets were to the fore in the home match in Masterton last March.

The woolhandling team comprises Gisborne teenager Joel Henare and Te Awamutu competitor Keryn Herbert, who both competed in the New Zealand merino championships in Alexandra at the weekend and who are among the busiest on the New Zealand woolhandling circuit...

NZ Merino Shearing Champs - October 4, 2009

Invercargill shearer Nathan Stratford had to bank on everything coming right on the night to shut-out a surprise Australian challenge for top honours when he won the 48th New Zealand Merino final in Alexandra on Saturday night.

The 35-year-old said after the six-man, 12-sheep final, which ended with victory by a surprisingly comfortable margin of almost eight points over runner-up Damian Boyle, of West Australia: "I struggled all day, with my gear, with the sheep, with my confidence." But so too did Boyle, who only just made the 24-man quarterfinals cut after 50 shearers competed in the heats in the morning, while Stratford did qualify near the top of the order in fourth place.

Boyle turned it on to head the 12 qualifiers for the semi-final, while Stratford continued his "struggle," qualifying in seventh place, but the sign of things came when he stepped up to be top qualifier for the final.

With the pace off, time honours in the main event went to local favourite Colin O'Neill, shearing his 12 sheep in 22min 55.05sec, 21 seconds ahead of Stratford who produced easily the best quality points.

Stratford immediately forewent the chance to represent New Zealand in Australia next weekend in the away leg of the Trans Tasman Test Series, having a wedding to attend. The position in the three-man shearing team, alongside Te Kuiti shearer Dean Ball and Tony Coster, of Rakaia, will be taken by O'Neill's brother, 34-year-old Charlie O'Neill, who was fourth in last night's final, a feature of which was the appearance of King Country icon David Fagan, making the finewool final for the first time in more than 20 years.

The possibility of an Australian domination of the night was raised earlier in the night when Victorian shearers Scott Perry and Aaron Hope were first and second in the senior final, shorn over four sheep. Perry said both were shocked, having been New Zealand just a few days as representatives of the northern Shears at Bendigo, where they are the reigning senior and intermediate champions.

Golden Shears woolhandling champion Tina Rimene completed a notable double for 2009 when she won the New Zealand Merino Shears title in Alexandra on Saturday. She won the Golden Shears open in Masterton in Masterton, and last night also completed a North Island cleansweep of the finewool woolhandling titles with the senior title won by Krystal Wilson, of Hastings, and the junior title going to Ngahua Thwaites, of Masterton.

New Zealand kept ahead of the Australians by winning the invitation shearing and woolhandling teams events.

David Fagan defying all odds - October 2, 2009

If training makes a champion then shearing icon David Fagan seems to be defying all odds as he opens his 28th open-class season at the national finewool merino championships in Alexandra tomorrow (Friday)...

Turning 48 next month, Fagan professed as he headed south through Christchurch Airport today he hadn't shorn a sheep in more than two months, yet he hopes the when to new Shearing Sports New Zealand season ends in April it will be with tickets in hand for Wales and the chance to win the World title for a sixth time.

A stunning winner of the Golden Shears open for a 16th time in Masterton earlier this year, he confirmed, possibly for the first time publicly, he'd like to win the title again at its 50th anniversary in March and claim one of the two machine shearing places in the New Zealand team for the 14th World Championships next July.

If he doesn't he will join the last-ditch battle for the second position in the New Zealand open in hometown Te Kuiti four weeks later.

"I would like to," he said, "but that's a long shot, a long way off. But you can't win if you're not in,"

He also has a hankering for being able to make the bid with nephew James Fagan, to whom he relinquished a position in the New Zealand team which shore eight tests in Scotland, England and Wales this year.

"Wouldn't that be good," he said.

The practice starts with the heats in Alexandra, where James Fagan defends the finewool title he won in his uncle's absence last year.

It is the compulsory first stop in the PGG Wrightson National, a series of events over five different wool types throughout the country which this year carries as a major prize the use of a Hyundai Santa Fe for one year.

The qualifying series continues at the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate next week, the national Corriedale championships at the Christchurch Show in November, the national lambshearing championships at Raglan in January, and the Pahiatua Shears (second-shear) at the end of February.

The top 12 shearers qualify for the final stages to be shorn at the Golden Shears.

Fagan, who first shore open class in 1983, said: "I'm entered at Alexandra. I may as well shear them all."

After Alexandra and Waimate, he will compete in the first two North Island competitions of the season, the Poverty Bay Show and the Hawke's Bay's Great Raihania Shears, and the Christchurch show before taking a break until the competitions in the New Year.