

Judges take break as Coster gets his break - October 31, 2010

A Shearing Sports New Zealand experiment aimed at enhancing the spectacle of competitions throughout the country appears to have met with universal approval after being tried at the Ashburton A and P Show Shears on Saturday.

The competition did away with board judging in the open final and SSNZ delegate Gavin Rowland, who shone in the event and finished third behind New Zealand team members and fellow Rakaia shearers Tony Coster and Grant Smith said all involved appreciated the "uncluttered" appearance of the board, and also believed the use of board judging would not have affected the outcome.

Quality judging was still done in the pens outside.

Ashburton was the first show to put its hand up for the experiment after the issue was raised at the SSNZ annual meeting in Christchurch in August, and Rowland said it was likely at least one other South Island show would experiment during the season.

The five-man final was won by 2009 and 2010 PGG Wrightson National champion Coster, turning the tables on Smith who had won three years in a row, in 2007, 2008 and 2009, credentials which in August saw him accorded Master Shearer status at the annual meeting of Shearing Sports New Zealand.

Coster had been runner-up in the last two years, and in the Northern A and P Show final at Rangiora on October 23 also finished second to Smith, who has now reached the finals in all four shows he has contested in New Zealand this season.

Two weeks ago the pair joined World champion and Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson in becoming the first New Zealand team to beat Australia in a machine shearing test in eight years.

The other finals on Saturday all went to in-form shearers, headed by senior Kaleb Godsiff, of Pleasant Point, who added Ashburton to victories at Rangiora and the New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate, and Loburn's Allen Gemmell, who won his third blade-shearing final in 15 days, having won the Australian Open in Hay, NSW, on October 16, and the Rangiora title seven days later.

Floyd Neil, of Timaru, and Phoenix Hawkins, of Rakaia, won the intermediate and junior finals respectively, repeating the victories each had achieved at last month's Ellesmere Show.

King regains crown as The King dips out - October 23, 2010

Napier shearer Dion King regained the Great Raihania Shears Open title at the Hawke's Bay Show in Hastings on Friday - beating veteran reigning champion and season's frontrunner David Fagan off the board by almost three sheep.

King, 35, whipped through 20 full-wooled sheep in 16.26sec, a remarkable 2min 39sec ahead of the 49-year-old otherwise in-form Fagan, who last off in the four-man final and unable to improve the position in the calculation of quality points.

Fagan was also beaten on both time and in the final count by new World champion and Waipawa shearer Cam Ferguson and Adam Brausch, of Dannevirke, who were second and third respectively.

While commending the outstanding effort by King, Fagan was at some loss to explain his own demise after an all-conquering fortnight in which he won the New Zealand Spring Shears at Waimate and the Poverty Bay open in Gisborne, as well as two speedshears.

"I don't know, I just didn't get into it," he said. "I guess it's just a bad day at the office."

"It happens," he said, recalling that in Gisborne he had won the race and beaten King off the board, while a week earlier it was King that was first-off in Waimate and Ferguson looking-on from more than a sheep-and-a-half behind.

King had won the Great Raihania Shears from 2004-2006, the first three years after the Hawke's Bay Show title was relaunched to commemorate Rimitiri Rainania's win in the World's first machine shearing event at the show in 1902.

Also the winner of a Golden Shears Open and PGG Wrightson National series double in 2006, he has since been dividing his time between New Zealand and Australia, and is currently building a home in Bribie Island on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, while shearing mainly in the Guyra area, about three hours to the south in Northern New South Wales.

With a second, a third and now a win in successive contests, he plans to shear in the Wairarapa Spring Shears in Carterton next weekend and the Manawatu A and P Show at Manfield a week later, before tackling the New Zealand Corriedale Championships in Christchurch and the Central Hawke's Bay Show on successive days in mid-November.

He will then return to Australia, but said he would be back in New Zealand in time for the national lambshearing championships at Raglan on January 8.

World teams woolhandling champions Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, and Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape, were first and third in the Open woolhandling final in Hastings, split by Dallas Mihaere, of Dannevirke.

Mihaere had scored her first Open win at Waimate, while in Gisborne Alabaster had scored her first win since returning from the World Championships in Wales where she had to settle for second in her bid to retain a World title she won two years earlier in Norway.



Japanese shearer SHUN OISHI chats with judge Carol Hodge after shearing at the Golden Shears in March. On Saturday October 24, he won the Junior final at the Northern A and P Shears at Rangiora. It was his first win of the new season, and only his second in New Zealand, his first having been at Oxford last April.

Masterton shearer Matene Mason successfully defended the Great Raihania Shears senior shearing title in crushing fashion. A week after winning the Povefry Bay senior final, he beat runner-up Davy Garland, of Palmerston North, by almost seven points. Golden Shears junior champion Brett Roberts scored maintained an unbeaten intermediate class record with his third win in a fortnight, and Gisborne shearer Matt Spence won his first Junior title.

Kyle Wihongi, of Hastings, won his first senior woolhandling title, with first-time senior finalist Michelle White, also of Hastings, the runner-up, and the junior woolhandling final was won by Kiley Laris, of Masterton.

South Island

Meanwhile, the four South Island members of the New Zealand team which scored a cleansweep of three trans-tasman tests in Australia last week marked their return home by dominating the Northern A and P Show Shears in Rangiora on Saturday.

Grant Smith and Tony Coster, both of Rakaia, finished first and second respectively in the Open machine-shearing final, while Allen Gemmell, of Loburn, and Brian Thomson, of West Melton, were first and second in the Open blades final, beating Mike McConnell, of Cave, who had beaten both of them in the New Zealand Spring Shears final in Waimate a fortnight ago.

First off the board in the four-man machine final was Scotsman and former World champion Tom Wilson, now based at Darfield. He finished the 10 sheep in 13 minutes 12sec, with Smith next off 13 seconds later.

It was continuing good form for Smith who in August became the latest shearer accorded Master status by Shearing Sports New Zealand. He had since opened the season by being second to Australian shearer Damien Boyle in the New Zealand Merino Championships in Alexandra, and also reaching the final of the New Zealand Spring championships won by Fagan.

Gemmell, who was a sheep and a half ahead of Thomson at the end and shored his five sheep in 13min 48sec, was also continuing individual winning form, having won the Australia blades final during the five-day New Zealand team's trip.

Kaleb Godsiff, of Pleasant Point, scored his second senior win of the season, while there was a popular victory in the junior final, won by Japanese shearer Shun Oishi.

Kiwi cleansweep of shearing and wool tests - October 17, 2010

New Zealand has beaten Australia in a machine shearing test in Australia for the first time in eight years during an historic Kiwi cleansweep of three trans-tasman shearing and woolhandling matches during the Australian championships.

New Zealand also extended a sequence of woolhandling wins over Australia, and the third win came in the first official blade shearing tests between the two countries.

The triumphs came in remote Hay in southwest New South Wales on Saturday night, highlighted by the win by the New Zealand machine shearers, World champion Cam Ferguson, of Waipawa, and Rakaia shearer Tony Coster and Grant Smith.

They beat the Australian team of former World champion Shannon Warnest, and 2010 World championships competitors Jason Wingfield and Bill Hutchinson. In a big surprise, in a contest of eight

merino ewes and eight half-breed lambs for each shearer expected to favour the home team, the Kiwis countered the faster Australians with superior quality and won by almost three-and-a-half points.

New Zealand had not won an Australia leg of the annual home and away transtasman machine tests since being victors in Esperance, West Australia, in 2002.

The Kiwis were favourites to win the other two tests, with woolhandlers Joel Henare, of Gisborne, and Ronnie Goss, of Apiti, winning their clash blades shearers Brian Thomson, of West Melton, and Allen Gemmell, of Leeston, sealing the cleansweep.

Henare and Goss added to the success by finishing first and second in the individual woolhandling final at the championships.

The blades shearers have a rematch at the Canterbury Show next month, while the next transtasman machine shearing and woolhandling tests will be at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

Slips, closed roads, still no block for champion Fagan - October 16, 2010

A few slips and a few blocked roads were no barrier to King Country shearing icon as he made his way across the North Island to win another Open-class shearing title at the Poverty Bay Show in Gisborne today.

Fagan drove more than 350km to get to the event, and to win the first competition of his 50th year, just as he did the last of his 49th at Waimate a week earlier.

It was also touch-and-go for event organisers who rallied to get dry sheep in the wake of the East Coast's wet week, and with conditions finally hot and sunny outside with a huge crowd at the Show, Fagan put on a classy effort battling 2006 Golden Shears champion Dion King, of Napier, for the lead in a four-man final over 20 sheep.

They were near blow-for-blow over the last six-sheep, but Fagan still managed to pull out the extra at the end to win the race by five seconds and finish in 17min 35secs, for Open-class career win number 605..

When quality points were calculated it was Far North shearer Rowland Smith who had grabbed the runner-up's cheque, a repeat of a surprise result when he almost downed hot-pot Fagan in the New Zealand open final in Te Kuiti last April. Fagan claimed the victory by 1.25pts, with a gap of over four points from Rowland to Smith, while Masterton-based Dannevirke shearer Paerata Abraham was fourth, after finishing more than two sheep in arrears in his biggest final to date in the North Island.

Fagan had previously won in Gisborne five times, and was runner-up last year before going on to win the Great Raihania Shears title in Hastings at the Hawke's Bay Show. He will again cross the island for a defence of that title next Friday.

Taihape schoolteacher and former World individual woolhandling champion Sheree Alabaster wouldn't have seen a lot of sheep and wool lately but she was still good enough to win at her new season's debut, in the Open woolhandling final.

Alabaster won by a comfortable 25 points from Te Kuiti-based Te Awamutu woolhandler Keryn Herbert, the pair being on the board together in New Zealand for the first time since they won the World teams title in Wales, where Alabaster ceded her individual title to host country hero Bronwen Tango.

Third in today's final was Dannevirke's Dallas Mihaere, fresh from a maiden Open-class win in the New Zealand Spring Shears Open at Waimate last week.

Kiwis primed for wool board tests in three-day Aussie raid - October 13, 2010

New Zealand's biggest-ever shearing and woolhandling team has crossed the Tasman determined to claim the first away test-match cleansweep over Australia in eight years in a remote corner of New South Wales on Saturday.

A unique representation of small-town New Zealand, the team for the test at Hay, more than 700km west of Sydney, carries the regular transtasman series complement of three machine shearers and two woolhandlers, plus for the first time in an official match two blades shearers.

With New Zealand having not won a machine shearing test in Australia since a match in Esperance, West Australia, in 2002, the pressure is most on the current black singlet trio of new World champion Cam Ferguson, from Waipawa in Hawke's Bay, and merino shearing trump cards Tony Coster and Grant Smith, both from Rakaia, in Canterbury.

Joel Henare, from Gisborne, on the East Coast of the North Island, and Veronica (Ronnie) Goss, from Apiti, in Manawatu in the Central North Island, will, however, be going for New Zealand's 10th consecutive transtasman woolhandling test win since the Kiwis' last defeat on either side of the Tasman at Millicent, South Australia, in 2005.

The inaugural transtasman test blades shearers, World championship third placegetters and Canterbury shearers Brian Thomson, West Melton, and Allen Gemmell, of Leeston, follow in the footsteps of two others who won an unofficial test when the last Australian leg of the annual home-and-away series' was held a year ago in Warialda, also in NSW.

The tests will be held during Sportshear Australia's national shearing and woolhandling championships, where the home team's machine shearers will be last year's national first and second placegetters Jason Wingfield, of Lexton, Vic, and Bill Hutchison, of Gilgandra, NSW, and former World champion Shannon Warnest, of Willalooka, South Australia.

The feature event will be shorn over eight merino ewes and eight crossbred ewe lambs for each shearer.

The Australian woolhandlers are Racheal Hutchison, of Gilgandra, and South Australian competitor Tina Denholm, who was a meritorious sixth in the World Championships final in Wales in July.

World championships blades shearers John Dalla and Nick Dennis were expected to be back together to take on the Kiwis, although the 21-year-old Dalla's position is unclear because of injury.

Fagan for sale - October 13, 2010

Shearing wife Wendy Fagan found just the way to celebrate husband David's 49th birthday today - she's selling his latest winning singlet for charity.

The PGG Wrightson National Shearing Competition singlet from last Saturday's New Zealand Spring Championships, signed by Fagan in "gold metallic marker" and recording career Open-class "Win 604", went-up on TradeMe mid-morning, billed as his last while aged 48 - the vendor suggesting: "Who knows? This could be his last win ever(ha, ha)."

It also promised the singlet from his 10th win in the Waimate event "Has been washed" - although not clarifying by whom. It had a reserve of \$1, and the auction closes next Wednesday, with proceeds to the Starship Foundation.

Whether it is the last winning singlet, however, was in the hands of the prolific champion, who competes this Saturday (October 16) at the Poverty Bay Show in Gisborne and two days after the singlet auction closure in the Great Raihania Shears at the Hawke's Bay Show, where he was the Open champion last year.

Fagan fires-up with win No 604, with pride - October 11, 2010

Pride in the black singlet sparked Kiwi shearing icon David Fagan to one of his most commanding victories when he claimed his 10th New Zealand Spring Shears title in Waimate on Saturday - his 604th win in 29 years of Open-class shearing competition around the World.

Due to turn 49 later this month and deciding to fly south to the New Zealand Spring Shears only to support a show worried about declining entries, Fagan was top qualifier in the heats and semi-finals, each time by more than two points clear of next-best and World champion Cam Ferguson, and then won the six-man final over 20 big and wooly romneys by almost four points from runner-up Dion King, of Napier.

Fagan said that with he and Ferguson set to shear a series of tests against the United Kingdom and Wales in the New Year, he had decided he would not be doing the black singlet justice if he didn't take part in the competitions during the summer.

Particularly pleasing was the feat of leading through all three stages, a comparatively rare feat even in the context of his own all-conquering career, and the fact that it came with a new, as-yet unnamed Lister prototype on which he has been working with the manufacturers over the last few months.

Fagan said he would be heading for the Poverty Bay Show in Gisborne next weekend, aiming to go one better than when he was runner-up last year to Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick, who early this week was still on his first working stint in Australia.

Te Kuiti gun Fagan said he planned to compete most weeks, following Gisborne with The Great Raihania Shears at the Hawke's Bay Show in Hastings and the NZ Corriedale Championships at the Canterbury Show in Christchurch, both defending titles he won last year.

His dominance on Saturday has already made him frontrunner and favourite to win the PGG Wrightson National, of which the Waimate heats doubled as the second round. His points with three qualifying rounds to go make him a near-certainty for the series semi-finals at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

He was top qualifier among 28 shearers in Saturday's heats, and repeated the performance in the semi-finals, each time more than two points clear of Ferguson, of Waipawa.. It was even more commanding in the final, which Fagan won by 3.895pts King, with Ferguson having to settle for third place.

In the final, Ferguson was unable to match Fagan for pace and it became a contest between the quality of Fagan and the speed of King, who won the race by 15 seconds and finished his 20 full-wooled crossbred sheep in 16min 42.59sec. Fagan was ably to comfortably recover the time-deficit with easily the better points from pen judging.

Winton shearer Darin Forde held the flag for the South Island, finishing fourth, Gisborne's Ian Kirkpatrick was fifth in his best performance since being promoted to Open-class after a Golden Shears and New Zealand championships senior double two seasons ago, and Rakaia shearer Grant Smith was sixth, a week after finishing runner-up to Australian Damien Boyle in the New Zealand Merino Championship.

Pleasant Point shearer Kaleb Godsiff won the senior title with 2007 Golden shears junior champion Phillip Rangiwai, of Mataura, second, and Royal Welsh Show senior champion Willie Hewitson, of Invercargill, third.

Last season's Golden Shears Junior and Novice champions each made successful new-season debuts in their new grades, the intermediate final on Saturday being won by Brett Roberts, of Mataura, and the Junior event by Masterton shearer David Gordon, who at the age of 13 in March in his home town became the youngest person to win a title in the 50 years of the Golden Shears.

Mike McConnell, from Cave, retained the blades shearing title he won last year, with superior quality turning the tables on 2008 winner Bill Michelle, of Timaru, who had won the race through their five sheep by more than 50 seconds.

There were new faces all-round among the woolhandling champions, marked by Dallas Mihaere, of Dannevirke, in a boilover career-first Open victory, downing New Zealand representatives Joel Henare, of Gisborne, and Keryn Herbert, of Te Awamutu, in the final. Jamie Leggert, of Rangiora, won the senior final ahead of more favoured finalists Shani Graham, of Masterton, Juliette Lyon, of Alexandra, and Cushla Gordon, of Masterton, while Alpha Wade, of Cromwell, won an all-South Island junior final.

The Shearing Sports New Zealand season continues next Saturday with the first North Island competition at the Poverty Bay Show in Gisborne and in the South Island the Ellesmere Show in Leeston.

But several big names will be missing, with a New Zealand team in Australia for transtasman machine shearing, blades shearing and woolhandling tests in Hay, NSW.

Results of the New Zealand Spring Shears at [Waimate click here](#)

Shears legend ponders another southern challenge - October 6, 2010

King Country shearing legend David Fagan has found the whiff of a few sheep and the competition bug just too much to resist in a snap decision to make a second trip to the South Island in a week for Saturday's New Zealand Spring Shears in Waimate.

Turning 49 later this month and having confirmed a role in his 29th Open-class season by competing in the New Zealand Merino Championships in Alexandra last weekend, he lodged his entry last night (Tuesday).

It was a fillip for organisers who when the original closing date passed last weekend pondered a possibility of one of their few shows without Fagan since he first appeared in Open-class shearing in 1982.

He won the Waimate final eight times between 1984 and 2003, part of a career tally of 603 Open-class wins, the last of which came at Corwen in Wales in July, just two days after finishing second to fellow New Zealander Cam Ferguson in the World Championships final and joining the rising star for victory in the teams final.

Waimate show executive officer Eileen Smith was also pondering the possibility of surprisingly low entries after good season-opening numbers at Alexandra, but saw Fagan's call as a good omen.

The veteran shearer, booking a return flight from Auckland to Christchurch to get to the Mid-Canterbury contest and then confirming the entry, admitted the "bug is back" and added: "It's good to support the shows."

While eliminated in the quarterfinals of the tough finewool merino contest at Alexandra in his first shear since Wales, he had scored well for his placing in the heats - the compulsory first round of the five-round PGG Wrightson National qualifying series.

It made Waimate less important in the race for points if he is to challenge for his 10th series victory when the final is shorn at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March, but he said: "If you're going to do the circuits, it's not much use if you're not full-on."

He will compete in the third round in Christchurch next month, defending the national corriedale title he won last year, but says the early-season appearances don't necessarily mean he'll be on the board every weekend during the 60-show Shearing Sports New Zealand season. He will be at the Golden Shears, and a month later will defend his New Zealand Open title in home-town Te Kuiti.

While the Waimate entry was last night still light, with Fagan the 17th entry after more than 40 shorn in the Open class at Alexandra, the field does include Hawke's Bay gun Ferguson whose meteoric rise effectively began when he won at Waimate a year ago. Rakaia shearers Tony Coster and Grant Smith, with whom Ferguson will shear for New Zealand in a transtasman test at Hay in New South Wales next week, will also compete at Waimate.

World woolhandling champion team member Keryn Herbert will be in the open woolhandling field on Saturday, while a good bladeshearing entry of at least 13 includes Canterbury pair Brian Thomson and Allen Gemmell in their first competition in New Zealand since finishing third in their World teams final in Wales.

Rare Aussie win in NZ merino champs - October 3, 2010

An Australian shearer with his back supported by a sling has upset the Kiwi guns to win the first title of the New Zealand shearing season.

Damien Boyle, from Broomehill in West Australia, won the New Zealand Merino Open Championship in Alexandra on Saturday (October 2), winning a six-man final in which the runner-up was veteran Kiwi finewool shearing exponent, Rakaia shearer and 2000 and 2004 winner Grant Smith, who was recently accorded Master Shearer status by Shearing Sports New Zealand.

But there was still a major Kiwi success, with hometown girl Taiwha Nelson scoring what she regarded as the biggest triumph of her career by winning the Open woolhandling title - her third win in the event, and her fifth consecutive Alexandra final since giving-up working in the woolsheds five years ago to raise a family.

Another hometown favourite, Charlie O'Neill, was third in the shearing final and defending champion Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, was fourth.

Boyle, who was top-qualifier for the semi-finals but last-man-in to the final, had spent years trying to pick-off New Zealand's top finewool shearing prize, first reaching the final at Alexandra in 1998 and being runner-up at least twice, including last year. Just a fortnight ago, he won the latest of a string of titles at the Royal Perth Show. The last Australian to win the title at Alexandra was Ian Wratten, of Armidale, NSW, in 1991.

Shearing Sports New Zealand chairman and former shearing champion John Fagan, said the win was good for the sport.

It was also the first time he could recall an Open-class final being won by a shearer using a supporting sling.

"He'd been in alot of events all day, and I think he was starting to feel the effects," Mr Fagan said. "He had a marvellous shear. All day he had been qualifying on quality, but in the final he lifted his pace as well. He's the sort of guy if you don't beat on time, you're gone."

The logic of Boyle's self-preservation was shown in the times shearers spent bent over their merinos - about two minutes a sheep compared with less than a minute a sheep in the smaller mainly crossbred sheep of other contests throughout the country.

Smith was first finished taking 23min 0.58sec, Boyle was fourth 54 seconds later, and Stratford was last off.

The championships are the only merino event on this season's Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar of 60 shows, ending in late April. The Open shearing heats being a compulsory first



Above: Taiwha Nelson
Open Woolhandling Champion



round in the PGG Wrightson National, in which competitors accrue points at shows on five different wool-types, aiming to make the semi-finals and final to be shorn at the Golden Shears in Masterton in March.

O'Neill's brother, Colin, headed the qualifiers, and second-to-top was veteran Mossburn contractor Mana Te Whata, a 1981 Golden shears junior champion who won six Alexandra titles from 1987 to 1995.

The leading North Islander was Te Kuiti shearing icon and eight-times series winner David Fagan, who turns 49 later this month. New World champion and Hawke's Bay shearer Cam Ferguson, who had been shearing merinos in Central Otago for over a month since returning from his triumph in Wales, failed to qualify for the weekend's quarterfinals of 24 shearers, but still secured the vital one series point for taking part.

Nelson had to overcome a couple of the World's best in her final, going one-better than last year when she was runner-up. Gisborne teenager Joel Henare, the No 1 ranked woolhandler in New Zealand last summer and reigning New Zealand Open champion, was second, and former World champion and third was reigning Golden Shears champion Joanne Kumeroa, of Wanganui. Fourth was first-time open competitor Amy-Lee ruki, of Invercargill.

Nelson's only preparation was a short time at Earnscleugh the previous day, schooling a first-time junior competitor. "Otherwise," she said, "I haven't been in a shed for years."

Originally from Wyndham but having spent almost 15 years in the sheds working for Alexandra contractors Peter and Elsie Lyon until she gave up to raise her children, 35-year-old Nelson said it was a big surprise to win the final.

"I was tired," Nelson said at the home of father-in-law and Alexandra wool industry identity John Nelson.

She conceded time points to all three fellow finalists - a clear 10pts behind Henare, the first to finish - but the others had more of an inkling who might have won, and told her that when they successively raised their hands to the judges, they looked along the board and saw just one clean table and floor.

It was a consistent effort, for Nelson had been third behind Henare and Kumeroa in the heats, and was top qualifier in the semi-finals which were the end of the day for New Zealand World Champion team member Keryn Herbert, from Te Awamutu.

Nelson (nee Karamaena) says she still likes the woolshed life, but while hoping to return at some stage to Alexandra to live doesn't plan returning to work as a woolhandler.

She's also in no hurry to get the children into the industry, although five-year-old son Trey showed some promise when he made his competition debut in Alexandra's Teddy Bear Shear, where singledet youngsters with pretend handpieces get to mimic their dads and get a mocassin in the door to the world of championship shearing.



Above: Damien Boyle
Open Shearing Champion