

Kiwi shearers save best for Welsh swansong - July 26, 2009

New Zealand shearers have completed the Kiwi team's UK tour in triumphant fashion with a series-levelling test victory, a trifecta in a major open championship and a senior final quinella at the Cneifio Corwen Shears in Northeast Wales.

The most important was a one-point win by the Kiwi team of James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, and John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, over Welshmen Nicky Beynon and Gareth Evans, to level their four-test series 2-all. It also meant a 4-4 result from the eight-test tour, after a 2-0 defeat by Scotland and a 2-0 win over England.

Evans was first off the board clearing his pen of 20 Welsh mountain sheep in 10min 22sec, but Fagan, second off 16 seconds later, finished with the best points overall.

Fagan also won the six-man, 20-sheep open final, in which he was first off the board in 10min 27secs, three seconds before Kirkpatrick, with another 11 seconds back to Fagan's uncle and 13-times Corwen champion David Fagan, also of Te Kuiti. Once time and quality points were totalled, Fagan finished runner-up and Kirkpatrick was third.

It was James Fagan's third open championship of the tour, after winning the Lakelands Shears in England and Thursday's Royal Welsh Open.

Kirkpatrick's nephew, Golden Shears and New Zealand senior champion Ian Kirkpatrick, of Gisborne, also completed a double for the week by winning the Corwen senior final, his last senior competition before being upgraded to open class for the New Zealand season starting in October. Far North shearer Tipene Te Whata, who headed the New Zealand intermediate rankings last summer, scored his best senior result to date by finishing second, while English shearer Malcolm Sweeney, a regular competitor in New Zealand, was third.

David Fagan's son, Jack, was fifth in the Corwen junior final.

Shear tests go to wire in Wales - July 24, 2009

The New Zealand shearing team is faced with a must-win situation in ending its eight-test tour of Britain after losing the latest test at the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells.

John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, and James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, lost the first two tests to Scotland, and beat England twice, but are 1-2 down against Wales heading into the showdown at the Corwen Shears on Saturday.

The third test in Wales yesterday (Wednesday) was a disaster for Kirkpatrick who put in his best performances of the tour to be first off the board in both the test match and the Royal Welsh All Nations Open title, and would have posted top quality points and taken a meritorious double had it not been for a single automatic five-point penalty cut on one sheep in each of the 20-sheep events.

In a sport where results are often determined by fractions of a point, imposition of the automatic penalty is rare, but is done when a cut is detrimental to the breeding capability of a sheep or cause other long-term damage detrimental to its welfare or value.

Consequently, a test the Shear Blacks would have won by more than four points ended with Welshmen Nicky Beynon and Gareth Evans winning by 0.95pts, and Kirkpatrick was relegated to fourth in the six-man open final which did, however, still produce a Kiwi quinella with Fagan winning his second open

final of the tour, just cutting uncle David Fagan out of career title No 593, Another New Zealander, Northland shearer Matt Smith, was fifth.

One each way as Kiwis start Welsh shearing tests - July 19, 2009

New Zealand shearers John Kirkpatrick and James Fagan have bounced back from a shock narrow loss at the opening of a four-test series against Wales by scoring a comfortable win in the second match just 24 hours later.

The loss on Friday was by just five-hundredths at Cothi on Friday, when the pair were beaten by Welshman Gareth Daniels and Wyn Jones. On Saturday, the Shear Blacks turned the tables on the Welsh with victory by seven points over newcomers Gareth Evans and Rhys Jones.

The series ends this week with the third test at the Royal Welsh Show, where the 14th Golden Shears World Championships will be held next year, and the fourth test at the Corwen Shears.

Fagan, from Te Kuiti, was runner-up in the individual open championships during the weekend, beaten at Cothi on Friday by Daniels and by Evans the next day at Lampeter, where Fagan pushed his uncle and five-times World champion David Fagan, also from Te Kuiti, back into third place, by just 15-hundredths of a point.

Kirkpatrick was first off the board in the 20-lambs Lampeter final but was unable to maintain the same advantage on quality and was relegated to fifth.

Kirkpatrick's nephew, Ian Kirkpatrick, from Gisborne, won the Cothi senior title, one of his last in the senior class before returning home to New Zealand and promotion to open class in the new season starting in October.

There was further success for the first family of shearing when David Fagan's son, Jack, was fifth in the Cothi Shears junior final.

Fagan wins - again. - July 17, 2009

Ageless Kiwi shearing champion David Fagan has won for the second time in two countries in two days as he begins to dominate the exploits of New Zealand shearers in Britain.

Fagan, 47, who stunned the shearing world with a 16th Golden Shears open title in Masterton in March, won the Great Yorkshire Open yesterday (Thursday NZT, Wednesday UKT), his ninth win in the event, 140th in Britain and his 592nd open win since his first in 1983.

It came on a day with a 4am start and a two-hour ferry crossing from Northern Ireland after three wins at historic Glenarm Castle the previous day, comprising the Glenarm Open, a speedshear, and a teams win with nephew James.

Fagan's latest victory was the only block between a complete return to winning form for Napier shearer John Kirkpatrick who was the best performer as he and James Fagan scored New Zealand's second second test shearing win over England in a week. They finished second and third respectively in the open to David Fagan, in which Kirkpatrick was first off the board, cutting out his pen of 20 swalesdales in 13min 37sec.

Kirkpatrick was also first off in the test, shearing 15 in 11mins and also carding the best quality points, taking New Zealand to a two-two record after tests against England and Scotland, heading into a four-test series against Wales which starts at the Cothi Shears tomorrow.

Fagan king of the castle in Ireland - July 15, 2009

Veteran New Zealand shearer David Fagan showed there's still plenty of class and speed in his 47-year-old frame with two wins within a few hours at an historic castle in Northern Ireland today.

Fagan moved a step closer to his 600th win in more than a quarter-century of open class competition by taking the Glenarm Championship at Glenarm Castle in County Antrim, and a few hours later won a speedshear with a best time of 18.08sec for a single sheep.

The Te Kuiti shearing icon, who in March won the Golden Shears open in Masterton for a 16th time and who has been awarded both the MNZM and ONZM for his services to shearing, has now won 591 open titles, dating back to his first at Balclutha in 1983.

Both of today's wins, including his 139th championship in Britain and Ireland, where he also won the Glenarm title in 2006, came at the expense of nephew and New Zealand team member James Fagan who had to settle for second in both events.

James Fagan, also from Te Kuiti, did however reach the winner's circle as he and New Zealand teammate John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, won a tri-nations shear, beating Scotsmen Simon Bedwell and John Lamb and Irish shearers Willie Jones and Paul Smith.

The New Zealanders later headed for Yorkshire where an unofficial test will be shorn tomorrow (Thursday), and the next day James Fagan and Kirkpatrick compete at the Cothi Shears, resuming a seven-test UK series with the first of four tests against Wales.

Shears Win in Northern Ireland - July 15, 2009

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Today's victory, his 139th in Britain and Ireland where he also won the Glenarm title in 2006, came at the expense of nephew and New Zealand team member James Fagan who had to settle for second.

James Fagan and Kiwi teammate John Kirkpatrick are on a seven-test UK tour which passes the half-way mark on Friday, with the first of four tests against Wales.

Shearers Win - July 12, 2009

The New Zealand shearing team has bounced to winning form on a three-nations tour of Britain with victory over England.

The win by James Fagan and John Kirkpatrick, over a new English team of Adam Berry and Mark Fox, at the Lakelands Shears on Saturday followed losses in the first two tests of the tour against Scotland.

It was an even more successful day for the Kiwi pair, with Fagan, from Te Kuiti, winning the Lakelands Shears open, and Napier-based Kirkpatrick finishing second.

Kirkpatrick's nephew, Ian Kirkpatrick, from Gisborne, won the Lakelands Shears senior title.

The Kiwis now head for a four-test series in Wales.

Kiwi shearers locked out at Lochearnhead - July 08, 2009

New Zealand shearers John Kirkpatrick and James Fagan have again struggled with the sheep and shearers of Scotland to be beaten for the second time in a week at the start of a seven-test United Kingdom tour.

The latest defeat, giving Scottish shearers Gavin Mutch and Hamish Mitchell a 2-0 series victory, came on Sunday at the Lochearnhead Shears, one of the biggest shearing competitions in Britain.

For the Scots, who had also won at the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh a week earlier, it was some consolation for their demise as the favoured Northern Hemisphere team at last October's Golden Shears World Championships in Norway, where they had to settle for fifth in the teams final won by Kirkpatrick and Kiwi teammate Paul Avery.

In the latest contest, Fagan, from Te Kuiti, pulled out all the stops to steal the test through 15 Scottish blackface sheep, which he finished in 9min 14sec, beating Mutch off the board by seven seconds, with Mitchell taking 9min 46sec. Kirkpatrick, from Napier, was more than a sheep behind his teammate and finished in 10min 16sec.

The Kiwis were unable to match the Scots for quality, Mutch having the best job on the board where he conceded just 0.8 penalty points and Mitchell scoring best outside in the pens, as the home team swept to victory by 5.62pts.

Fagan finished fourth in the final of the Lochearnhead Shears open, but Kirkpatrick, winner of that title five years ago and of the South of Scotland open last month, did not qualify for the semi-finals.

An unofficial New Zealand team including Southland shearers Shane Harvey and Troy Shirley was fourth in an invitation international relay, while Feilding shearer Aaron Haynes was best of five New Zealanders in the senior event, but just missed a place in the final. The others included 2008-2009 top-ranked New Zealand intermediate champion Tipene Te Whata, of Tautoro in the Far North, Golden Shears and New Zealand senior champion Ian Kirkpatrick, of Gisborne, and Golden Shears intermediate champion Bevan Guy, of Kaeo.

Kirkpatrick and Fagan next meet England in a test at the Lakeland Shears at Cockermouth, Cumbria, next weekend.

Kiwis beaten in Highland shears fling - June 30, 2009

New Zealand has suffered its first shearing test loss in the Northern Hemisphere in almost two years by being beaten by Scotland at the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh at the start of a 2009 United Kingdom Tour.

The two-man Kiwi team of 2008 and 2009 New Zealand champion John Kirkpatrick, of Napier, and 2009 New Zealand Shears circuit winner James Fagan, from Te Kuiti, were beaten by New Zealand-based 2008 UK circuit champion Gavin Mutch, and reigning Scottish national champion Hamish Mitchell, on Sunday.

The winning margin of about four points was determined mainly by the time over the 18 sheep, with Kirkpatrick particularly struggling to settle the less-familiar cheviot sheep used for the contest.

Fagan, the jockey-sized nephew of 1.85m-plus shearing icon David Fagan, was first off the board in 12min 45sec, beating Mutch by six seconds with Mitcehl next on 13min 26sec, but Kirkpatrick was two sheep behind and last off in 15min 16sec.

He fared better in the Royal Highland open final, but had to settle for third behind winner and Northern Ireland shearer Kieran McCullough, and Mutch, the latter winning the race by half-a-minute in 15min 23sec, but havinmg to succumb at the final count to McCullough's better quality on the board and in the pens. Kirkpatrick and eventual fourth-placegetter Mitchell finished blow-for-blow in 16min 15sec, and Fagan was fifth.

The second test will be on Saturday at the Lochearnhead Shears, where Daviud Fagan and Paul Avery were beaten by the Scots in 2007 in tNew Zealand's last official shearing test defeat in the UK.

Kiwi shearers up and running in U.K. - June 24, 2009

New Zealand shearing champion John Kirkpatrick is expected to start a favourite to win the Royal Highland championships in Edinburgh this weekend after getting a United Kingdom tour off to a good start with victory in the South of Scotland championships.

While just beaten by up-and-coming Scots hope Simon Bedwell in the race for time honours, the Napier gun was able to claim overall honours with a cleaner shear, typical of the form which won him 18 titles in New Zealand last season, including a second consecutive New Zealand Open final in Te Kuiti in April. Bedwell shore 20 Texel cross hogs in 14min 21sec, beating Kirkpatrick off the board by four seconds.

Kirkpatrick is in Britain to prepare for a series of up to eight shearing tests with teammate James Fagan, of Te Kuiti, both aiming to continue the form shown by Kirkpatrick and Taranaki shearer Paul Avery in a cleansweep of tests in the UK last year.

The competition heats up this weekend with the expected competition of Scottish World championship team members Hamish Mitchell and New Zealand-based Gavin Mutch, beginning their campaigns to retain their places in the next World Championships to be shorn at the Royal Welsh Show next year.

Kirkpatrick and Fagan are among several New Zealand shearers competing on the increasingly busy show circuit in Britain, which have already provided at least three wins for shearers from downunder, including a double by brothers Matt and Rowland Smith, of Ruawai, in Northland.

Matt Smith won an open final at Balmoral on May 15, while Rowland, fourth in that final, turned the tables a week later at the Devon County Show. Aaron Haynes, of Feilding, won the senior Isle of Man title.