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New Zealand wins shears test, but it was close Boyo

The CP Wool New Zealand shearing team has ended its 2018 UK tour with a win over Wales at the Corwen Shears in North Wales today (July 29 UK Time) in possibly the closest-ever result in international teams shearing.

Nathan Stratford, of Invercargill, and David Buick, of Pongaroa, with overall points tied and the result decided on a 0.5pts margin in quality points, beat the new Welsh World championships pairing of Alun Loyd Jones, of Llangollen, and Richard Jones, of Corwen, stopping Wales from scoring a second home series cleansweep against New Zealand.

With Wales winning 3-1, it left New Zealand without a series win in Wales since 2011, although Wales has never won a test in the reciprocal series' in New Zealand.

Alun Loyd Jones won the race for time honours, shearing the 20 lambs in 13min 2sec and beating Buick by six seconds, when one second either way would have otherwise decided the outcome.

Buick also had his best international championships result in seven shows on the tour, finishing third in the Corwen Shears Open final, in which Stratford was fifth. Buick was again second to finish, 23 seconds after Welsh shearer Gwion Evans who blasted through the 20 lambs in 11min 54 sec.

But the overall win, on combined time and quality points, went to Ian Jones, of Wales.

Meanwhile, Taranaki-based farmer and shearer Gavin Mutch took another step towards keeping his Scotland team place for next year's World Championships in France with a comfortable win in the Antrim Show Open final at Shane's Castle in Northern Ireland.

Including the penultimate round of the Scottish Circuit, the winner of which claims the second place in the team, it was Mutch's fifth win in five countries in a month, having also won at Lochearnhead (Scotland), Lakeland (England), Calgary (Canada) and midweek at the Royal Welsh Show.

A special feature of the Corwen Shears was the singing of the New Zealand national anthem by Welsh tenor and open-class shearer Aled Wyn Davies, quickly rated as one of the better by a non-New Zealand singer at any international sports event.

Davies went-it-alone in a complete contrast to the wayward effort of US jazz singer Crystal Collins when she was caught off-guard by production difficulties before the New Zealand-England rugby league test in Denver, Colorado, five weeks ago.

As a shearer Davies has shorn among the best in Wales, and in one notable success won a Senior all-nations title during the 1998 World Championships in Ireland.

Results:

Corwen Shears at Corwen, North Wales, on Saturday, July 28, 2018:

CP Wool New Zealand Team UK Tour: New Zealand 103.85pts (Nathan Stratford 14min 12sec, 51.9pts; David Buick 13min 8sec, 51.95pts) beat Wales 103.85pts (Alun Lloyd Jones 13min 2sec, 51.65pts; Richard Jones 14min 9sec, 52.2pts) on superior quality points (NZ 19.2pts, Wales 19.25pts). Wales won the series 3-1.

Corwen Shears Open final (20 lambs): Ian Jones (Wales) 12min 38sec, 49.15pts, 1; Gwion Evans (Wales) 11min 54sec, 49.65pts, 2; David Buick (New Zealand) 12min 17sec, 50.75pts, 3; Richard Jones (Wales) 14min 17sec, 52.4pts, 4; Nathan Stratford (New Zealand) 13min 58sec, 52.65pts, 5; Lloyd Rees (Wales) 13min 9sec, 53.9pts, 6.

Antrim Show at Shane's Castle, Northern Ireland:

Antrim Show Open final (20 sheep): Gavin Mutch (Scotland) 12min 28sec, 47.55pts, 1; Jack Robinson (Northern Ireland) 14min 41sec, 51.3pts, 2; Hamish Mitchell (Scotland) 13min 6sec, 51.65pts, 3; Ian Montgomery (Northern Ireland) 13min 39sec, 58.6pts, 4.