

MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, Golden Shears Media Group, media officer Shearing Sports New Zealand
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Smith closing in repeat Golden Shears win

Hawke's Bay shearer Rowland Smith continued his march towards his defence of the Golden Shears Open title by heading the field in both the heats and the quarterfinals on the second day of the 58th annual championships in Masterton today.

But it was yet another close call in the Top 30 quarterfinal shootout in front of a crowd of 800 tonight, with a margin of less than two-tenths of a point from second-to top qualifier Gavin Mutch in a now clearly identified quartet of top hopes, including three winners of both the Golden Shears Open final and the World Championship.

Smith, four times the winner and World champion in 2014, was followed in order by 2015 champion, 2012 World title winner and Scots international Mutch, of Whangamomona, Pongaroa farmer David Buick effectively the odd-man-out in third place, followed by reigning World champion and four-times Golden Shears Open winner John Kirkpatrick, of Napier.

Uniquely, just six of last year's top 12 made the cut, and it could have been just five had it not been for the four-thousandths of a points between last-man-in and 2017 first-time semi-finalist Ant Frew, of Pleasant Point, and next-man-in Ethan Pankhurst, of Masterton.

The top six in the semi-finals will contest shearing's most famous 20 minutes tomorrow night, starting just before 9pm.

The qualifiers for the Golden Shears Open shearing semi-finals on Saturday afternoon (in qualifying order): Rowland Smith, Gavin Mutch, David Buick, John Kirkpatrick, Mark Grainger, Tama Niania, Sam Welch, Murray Henderson, Nathan Stratford, Jimmy Samuels, Caisey Bailey, Ant Frew.

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