



**KING CROWNED:** Hastings' Dion King won the coveted New Zealand Shearing Championships open title in Te Kuiti on Saturday. To lift the trophy he had to beat hometown hero David Fagan and defending champion Rowland Smith from Ruawai.

## King wins NZ crown

BY TODD WARD

AFTER 13 years of trying to capture his first New Zealand Shearing Championships open title, Hastings shears Dion King's dream finally came true on Saturday night.

The 40-year-old held his nerve under extreme pressure in the open final and when the quality points were tallied together with speed and board totals he was crowned the 2015 NZ champion.

In the final, he had to see off a determined hometown hero David Fagan who set a cracking pace to be first off the board in 14m 59sec.

Fagan's lightning quick nephew James Fagan who pushed his uncle to the bitter end was next, then King, current world champion and 2014 NZ Shears winner Rowland Smith, Pongaroa's David Buick and Te Kuiti

gun Dean Ball.

Despite all eyes being on the race between the two Fagans who went blow-for-blow over the 20 sheep, King kept his cool to best Smith on points and claim the ultimate prize.

In his final ever appearance in a competitive shearing event, Fagan placed third ahead of Buick in fourth, Ball in fifth and James Fagan sixth.

### HONOURING FAGAN

Highlighting the importance and pressure King overcame in the final, it was James Fagan's and Ball's only show of the season in honour of David's retirement, and in phenomenal shows of skill and admiration both reached the final ahead of other guns such as 2015 Golden Shears champion Gavin Mutch and three-time NZ open winner John Kirkpatrick from Napier.

TO P4

## Tributes flow for Fagan

BY TODD WARD

"A TRUE legend", "simply astounding" and "a remarkable athlete" were just some of the accolades that described shearing legend David Fagan at last week's New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti.

The tributes flowed from friends, family and New Zealand's sporting elite at the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre during the weekend as the 53-year-old drew the curtain on his illustrious career as only a true champion could.

Bowing out at his home event which

he helped establish in 1985 as the King Country Shears with his older brother John, he won both the NZ No1 ranking and NZ Shearing circuit titles sparking a standing ovation from the packed house to honour and celebrate shearing's favourite son.

### FIRST OFF THE BOARD

Fuelled by adrenalin and emotion, Fagan gave his fans one last hoorah in the open final on Saturday night being the first to finish his 20 sheep and sparking an eruption of applause that physically shook the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre to

its foundations.

Cameras flashed, people cheered and Fagan shook the hands of his fellow finalists while wiping the sweat from his brow in trademark style.

It was his final appearance in a competitive event, and like he has for the past three decades, he represented himself, his family and Te Kuiti with pride.

Highlighting his passion for the local community, he donated his competition moccasins to be auctioned off immediately after the open final, raising \$650 for the Te Kuiti Volunteer Fire Brigade.



TO P3 DAVID FAGAN

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# What a weekend!

IT is with a real sense of pride I am writing this column, after our big weekend in the sun.

Saturday night's NZ Shears finals were without doubt one of the biggest nights in our district's proud history.

The huge crowd that attended to witness the last hurrah from David Fagan was testament to the huge contribution he has made to our district, and our country during his long career. And he very nearly produced the perfect fairytale ending!

Kudos must go to Peter Lange and his NZ Shears committee, who put on a totally professional event, spanning three great days and nights.

The showcase started with the speed shear on Thursday night, the increasingly popular corporate night on Friday and of course, the epic finals showcase on Saturday.

And although they had some challenges with torrential rain on Friday, the show continued uninterrupted.

Functions such as the corporate night, give us a great opportunity to showcase our district to a wider audience.

After Mike Barnett's win in the regional sports awards as Umpire of the Year, I made sure Raewyn Kirkman (Chair Sport Waikato) and Matthew Cooper (CEO Sport Waikato) attended to witness firsthand the outstanding sport that shearing is.

Like most guests I invite to this event, they were blown away with the skill and professionalism of the athletes, and the high class entertainment of the event itself.

Matthew rang me the next morning to thank me again, saying it had been a long time since he had attended an event with so much community spirit and pride.

He wants to book a table for next year to bring along Sport NZ personnel to see for themselves what a fantastic sport shearing is.

I see this as a great opportunity to really lift the profile of shearing in the eyes of NZ sporting decision makers.

Of course, it goes without saying that David has so much to be thanked for this.

For those of you who saw *Seven Sharp* on TV ONE on Friday night, I'm sure you will agree this was a priceless promotion for Te Kuiti, as well as a fitting tribute to David.

Finally, congratulations to Dion King for taking out this year's

### In My View



By Waitomo Mayor  
Brian Hanna

championship.

It was fitting to see someone who has been in the finals year after year for the past decade or so, to finally win his elusive crown.

And it was great to see three Te Kuiti shearers in this year's final – congratulations to Dean Ball and James Fagan for their outstanding results.

#### GREAT NZ MUSTER

We, of course had another great Muster and Running of the Sheep on Saturday.

Our record of never having a wet Muster day, looked under really threat on Friday as the skies opened, but Saturday turned out to be a corker. Congratulations to Donna Macdonald and her team for the huge amount of work that goes into making

this day such a festive and enjoyable occasion.

It was great to meet many outsiders visiting for the day, who were absolutely rapt they made the decision to visit Te Kuiti.

It was also great to see Creative Waitomo's art exhibition held in the first completed building in our railway building restoration project.

#### MOTOX CHAMPS

It is not often we have two national championship events on the same weekend in Te Kuiti.

I attended the opening of the NZ Junior Motocross Champs, which were on from Friday to Sunday.

When the weather turned wet on Friday this certainly challenged event organisers, but I hear racing went well on Saturday and Sunday.

It was a huge effort from a small, local organising committee to host such a huge and important event.

The local club has developed a track at the Mangarino Rd site that is now ranked one of the best in the country, and it is certainly a great site to view the racing.

All in all, a fantastic weekend to showcase our district to the rest of NZ and beyond.

Back to normality this week, but for those involved in the weekend events, I hope you feel the same sense of pride, and satisfaction that we were able to share this very special place we call home.

## IN BRIEF

#### Rugby boots still needed

AN appeal for spare pairs of rugby boots in good condition is still on (*Waitomo News*, April 2).

Waitomo News managing editor Sue Sarich says a few pairs have come into the paper's Te Kuiti office "and we're very grateful for those who have brought these in.

"But we are yet to receive any in our Otorohanga office."

The appeal is being driven by Wendy Valler from Benneydale who

says: "Kids grow out of their boots every year and lots of families can't afford new ones.

"I thought it would be a great idea to collect good secondhand ones, clean them up and pass them on."

The Waitomo News offices in both towns are the appeal's collection points.

The North King Country Junior Rugby competition kicks off on May 2.

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# Tributes flow for Fagan

**FROM P1**

Although he wouldn't go on to win the open final, the sentiment from everyone in attendance was "thanks for the memories".

On the night, many tried to sum-up Fagan's many achievements but maybe it was the great man himself who said it best – "it was because I enjoyed it."

Those that took the time to congratulate Fagan on his remarkable career, via recorded messages, included New Zealand rugby royalty – All Blacks captain Richie McCaw, former All Blacks coach Wayne Smith and the Prime Minister John Key.

"I just want to say to David congratulations on 30-odd years of shearing championships and records it's been pretty amazing to watch," said McCaw who said he appreciated David's shearing ability having grown up on a farm in North Otago.

"All the best on your retirement, I'm sure you've earned a well-earned rest and you can now reflect on what you've achieved. Well done."

Wayne Smith also wished Fagan the best for the future. "You've achieved world dominance over multiple years that teams like the All Blacks aspire to and it is simply astounding what you have done. On behalf of the All Blacks and the whole country you've done us all proud."

Mr Key hailed Fagan as "a remarkable athlete".

"Over the years you have been our most successful and prolific shearing champion. It's a shame that we're not going to see you competing on the stage for New Zealand any more but you've had a great career, you're a remarkable athlete and it has been a pleasure to watch you in action."

During Fagan's swansong, he was also interviewed by event MC Russell Harrison on Friday night where he spoke about his desire to win, competition rivals and his legacy on the sport.

"The desire and passion I had to keep winning came from within," said Fagan.

"But one guy I always admired was Andre Agassi [American tennis player]. I've always followed Agassi because I loved his attitude and spirit and I think attitude is the most important thing in everything we do.

"So when people would ask 'why do you succeed in what you do?' the answer was always attitude."

Regarding his toughest rivals, Fagan gave an amazing insight into how he dominated the sport for more than 30 years.

"There's no one individual I really focused on because the moment you start doing that you lose focus on yourself.

"Back in the days when I was going well, people would ask 'how are you going to go tonight?' and the answer was simple – If I can perform to the best of my ability then I'll do well. That's why my biggest enemy or my toughest rival was always myself."

Finally, Fagan was asked what he hoped his legacy on the sport of shearing would be.

"People often say 'why have you done so well?' and I tell them it was because I enjoyed it.

"It's just about being the best you can be and it doesn't matter what you do whether it be in business or sport be the best you can and never ever give up.

"I hope my legacy is – never say die and enjoy what you do."

Before leaving the stage, Fagan thanked his family – wife Wendy, children Jack and Jenna – for their support over the years and wished Jack (23) the best in his shearing career.

Capping the retirement party in style, Fagan and Wendy were presented by the NZ Shears committee with flowers and a sheep-themed memento on Saturday night as a thank you for the couple's contribution to shearing on and off the board.

NZ Shears Committee president Peter Lange echoed what the hundreds who watched the master for the final time were thinking when he described Fagan as "a true legend".

"During an era of shearing supremacy throughout the country David rose to the top due to his self-motivation and attention to detail," said Lange.

"David's winning ways are equalled only by the humility he has shown during the past 35-odd years.

"A gracious winner David has been a role model for shearing and over the past few months we have heard him described as a shearing icon, a master blaster, a freak and so on. They are all true."

The couple then took the stage amidst a spine-tingling standing ovation.

"I want to thank everyone for wishing me all the best for the future and to the committee for this incredible presentation," said Fagan "Thank you very much."

● *For the record, Fagan finished his career with 640 open wins worldwide, 17 New Zealand Shearing Championships, 16 Golden Shears, seven world teams and five individual world titles.*



**SPECIAL THANKS:** David and Wendy Fagan were honoured for their contribution to shearing with a special tribute at the New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti on Saturday.



**SUPER HUMAN:** Global shearing phenomenon David Fagan received more than one standing ovation as he bowed out of competitive shearing at the New Zealand Shearing Championships in Te Kuiti during the weekend.



**HOMETOWN HEROES:** Te Kuiti shearing and woolhandling masters David Fagan (left) and Keryn Herbert finished the 2014/2015 season ranked No1 in their respective disciplines.

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# King wins NZ's crown



**TOP TEAM:** Dion King with his son Cooper, took home close to \$20,000 in prizes after winning the New Zealand Shearing Championships open title in Te Kuiti on Saturday.

## FROM PI

The same could be said about defending champion Smith who was also scheduled to miss the event but decided to return to Te Kuiti to take on Fagan one last time.

The crowd literally held its breath as the results were announced about 30 minutes after the final, and although David hadn't pulled off the fairytale finish, King's victory proved very popular with the jam-packed Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre crowd.

## BUCKET LIST

"This has been on my bucket list for a few years now," he said after holding the winner's trophy aloft.

"I've been competing at this event for 13 years so it's nice to finally tick that box.

"I'd like to thank my boss for giving me the time off to compete at these competitions and now I've won this I'm expecting a pay rise when I get back!

"I'd also like to thank all my family but most of my wife Kylie and our little son Cooper.

"Cheers."

For his efforts, King won \$3000 in prize money, a Can Am quad bike valued at \$15,000, an Olympic watch and a trip overseas in June and July to represent New Zealand in the UK.

But the loudest cheer of course, was reserved for Fagan who earlier in the night had won the NZ Shears Circuit title to go with his No1 spot on Shearing Sports New Zealand's rankings for the 2014-2015 season.

It was a fitting end to Fagan's glittering career as he bowed out with grace and dignity in front of friends, family and more than 650 adoring fans.

"Dion, well done bro – thoroughly deserved," he said to King at the end of the night.

In other results from last week's event, Joel Henare from Gisborne won the open woolhandling title, Smith won the North Island Shearer of the Year honour and Team Te Kuiti (Aaron Haynes, Dion King and Cody Beck) beat Team Warnambool (Evo Hennessy, Roger Misfud and Nathan Touhey) to claim the Trans Tasman Trophy.

As for other Te Kuiti representatives, Keryn Herbert took home 3rd prize in the open woolhandling final, Mark Grainger finished 6th in North Island Shearer of the Year final, Josh Balme



**SUPER SERVICE:** Chief referee Mike Barnett from Aria was selected as this year's Keith and Maureen Wilkie Award winner for his outstanding services to shearing.

placed 6th in the intermediate final, Mitchel Hoare finished 6th in the junior final, Rapana Hohepa placed 6th in the novice final and Monique Mackay was 5th in the junior woolhandling final.

Also on Saturday night, Mike Barnett from Aria was selected as this year's Keith and Maureen Wilkie Award winner for his services to shearing, while founding NZ Shears committee member Ken Fagan was made a life member for his contribution to the event dating back to 1985.

"I would like to congratulate you guys [the NZ Shears Committee] on a marvellous show because I know firsthand how much goes into a show like this," said Ken.

"I would also like to acknowledge the past committee members who couldn't be here tonight.

"They know who they are – this one's for you."

For a full list of results, visit the website – [shearingsports.co.nz](http://shearingsports.co.nz)

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**STAUNCH SUPPORT:** Shearing fans Sir Colin Meads (second from left), Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna and mayoress Andrea Hanna show their support for the six men competing in the New Zealand Shearing Championships open final in Te Kuiti on Saturday night.