

A night for our Knights

BY TODD WARD

IT was a night of North King Country knights at the annual Brian Perry Waikato Regional Sports Awards in Hamilton on Thursday.

At the region's biggest sporting celebration of the year, it was Te Kuiti's two greatest sporting icons Sir Colin Meads and Sir David Fagan that stole the spotlight.

Amid a glittering line up of the district's sporting elite including Olympic and Commonwealth Games athletes and several New Zealand representatives, Sir Colin and Sir David were honoured with special awards for their contribution to the Waikato sporting landscape.

Sport Waikato chief executive Matthew Cooper said Sir David's special award was in recognition of his services to shearing sports and to acknowledge "a great Waikato sporting icon".

"Sir David's accomplishments include 642 open championships, five individual world championships, seven world team championships and he was the first shearer to shear 810 lambs and 702 ewes in a nine hour working day under World Record rules," said Cooper.

"He has represented New Zealand more than 120 times in various teams and retired from competitive shearing in April 2015 whilst ranked number one in New Zealand.

"And after all this success, Sir David has always remained consistent with his humility, his respect for his family and friends, his willingness to help others backed by one of the most positive attitude to life you'll ever see.

"For the most outstanding contribution to his sport, the Waikato region acknowledges Sir David Fagan."



HONOURABLE SIRS: Te Kuiti sporting legends Sir Colin Meads (left) and Sir David Fagan were honoured for their services to rugby and shearing respectively at the 2015 Brian Perry Waikato Regional Sports Awards in Hamilton on Thursday. PHOTO SUPPLIED

SHEAR DELIGHT

Adding to the occasion for Sir David, was the presentation of his award by Sir Colin.

"To be acknowledged by Sport Waikato at that level was very nice and what made it even more special was to get it presented by Colin," says Sir David.

"Having him there made it a very special occasion for me - it was great honour."

Sir David was supported at the event by his wife Wendy and his elder brother John.

"I really appreciated the acknowledge-

ment by Sport Waikato because shearing has always struggled for recognition so I thought it was great for them to acknowledge shearing on their biggest stage.

"It was a pretty slick evening honouring many great athletes and I was very happy to be a part of it."

ICON HONOURED

To cap the evening, event organisers surprised Sir Colin with one of its highest honours - the Hare Puke Award for Leader-

ship in Sport.

Adding to its prestige, the award which is not presented annually, is decided upon by a panel of current and former Sport Waikato chief executives and given only to "relevant, deserving participants".

"This award is a real favourite of mine, where if it is deemed appropriate - we salute one of our region's finest who has played a significant leadership role in driving sport," said Cooper.

"This award justifiably allows us to ac-

knowledge a person's contribution in the present, to follow previous award recipients such as Brian Perry himself in 2012, Alan Livingston in 2013 and of course Mark O'Callaghan from Taupo last year, whose names adorn this beautifully carved trophy by Hare's son Wiremu - the Toki Poutan-gata."

Cooper said he was delighted to announce the 2015 recipient and went on to list Sir Colin's many sporting successes and charitable contributions. **TO BACK PAGE**

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TE KUITI TITANS: Sir Colin Meads (left) presented Sir David Fagan with a special award for services to shearing at the 2015 Brian Perry Waikato Regional Sports Awards in Hamilton on Thursday. Sir Colin was then recognised for his own contribution to rugby and charity with the Hare Puke Award for Leadership in Sport. PHOTOS SUPPLIED

A night for our Knights

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“Tonight’s sporting leader is considered one of the greatest players in their chosen sport,” he said.

“This person draws people to events, many of which have helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for a variety of organisations.

“Our recipient is considered to be one of the greatest players in history and is an icon within New Zealand rugby.”

Cooper added that Sir Colin is a member of both the international Rugby Hall of Fame and the New Zealand Sports Hall of Fame and was named the country’s Player of the Century at the NZRFU Awards in 1999.

“In 2009, he was presented with the honour of Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit, but more often he goes by the name of ‘Pinetree’ or simply ‘Tree’,” said Cooper.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’m delighted to announce that the Waikato sport fraternity acknowledges and salutes the outstanding contribution of Sir Colin Meads as this year’s 2015 Hare Puke Leadership in Sport recipient.”

Sir Colin says receiving the award was a huge surprise.

“I was in shock there for a while,” he says.

“I was up there, I thought, to do a presentation to David. However, there was one for me also.

“It was a very special one and it took me completely by surprise.

“They said it was for outstanding contribution to sport which I guess is spaced over a hell of a lot of years.

“But aside from that, it was a great honour and I was very humbled by it all.”

Adding to a long list of accolades for Sir Colin, he says the Hare Puke Award rates up there with them all.

“It just means that Te Kuiti and the Waitomo district are getting recognised for their achievements. So it was a huge night not only for me and David, but for the entire district as well.”

Shifting the spotlight, Sir Colin says he was “very proud” to be a part of Sir David’s presentation.

“It was good to see David recognised for all his great shearing feats over the years.”

Sir Colin was supported at the event by his wife Verna, daughter Shelley Mitchell and granddaughter Christy.

Cooper says both knights were humble in receiving their awards and received standing ovations from the 500-strong crowd.



LADIES PLEASED: Sir Colin Meads and Sir David Fagan were supported by their wives Verna (left) and Wendy (second from right) when the knights received special recognition at the Waikato Regional Sports Awards in Hamilton on Thursday night.

After a standout year for their respective clubs, King Country Boxing Club’s Glenn Brightwell and Piopio Rugby Club’s Joy Jeffries were both nominated for Administrator of the Year honours which went to Squash

Waikato administrator Fran Hopkins of Hamilton.

The blue ribbon Sportsman of the Year title was won by Olympic gold medallist Eric Murray for a record sixth time.

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