

MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
April 8, 2018

CAPTION

Sheree Alabaster (left) after winning her eighth New Zealand Open woolhandling championship in Te Kuiti on Saturday night, with cousin Reuben Alabaster, who at the age of 14 won the championship, Junior shearing final on Thursday. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

Amazing Alabaster lands eighth national woolhandling title

It was “amazing” for the eighth time when Taihape school teacher, mother-of-one and former World champion Sheree Alabaster won the New Zealand Open woolhandling title for an eighth time in Te Kuiti last night(Saturday).

The 43-year-old, who earlier this year claimed her 50th win in Open finals, dominated the blend, oddment and fleece components of a five-handler final of six second-shear fleeces each in the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre, beating runner-up Logan Kamura, of Marton, by nine points.

Third, almost five points further back after dominating on time and board work, was reigning World champion Joel Henare, who after winning a 100th Opn title in claiming his sixth-consecutive Golden Shears Open title in Masterton last month was the warm TAB favourite going for his fourth New Zealand Open win in a row.

The 26-year-old Henare did enough however to end the season the No 1 ranked Open woolhandler nationwide for a seventh time, in an outcome decided in last night’s final, in which nearest challenger Pagan Karauria, of Alexandra, was fifth.

In contrast to the full-wool and second-shears Golden Shears contest, where Henare lead the field at all times, he was never in front at Te Kuiti, where the top qualifier in the heats was local hope and eventual fourth placegetter Keryn Herbert, with Rimene heading the quarterfinalists, and Kamura top qualifier into the final.

Alabaster explained her repeated success in Te Kuiti, in contrast to being yet to win a Golden Shears Open, by saying: “I love it here. I love the atmosphere.”

Making it more “amazing” was that she was able to put the family name on the 2018 honours board for a second time, after 14-year-old cousin Reuben Alabaster’s Junior shearing final win on Thursday.

Alabaster’s mother, Libby, is a woolhandling judge, and late-father Ray Alabaster competed at the first Golden Shears as a teenager in 1961 and was runner-up in two of his nine Golden Shears Open shearing finals.

Alabaster, who previously won the national title three times consecutively in 2004-2006, and 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2014, had one of her better seasons, with seven wins.

They included the North Island Circuit final during the Golden Shears, which claimed her place in the New Zealand trans-tasman series for next season with Henare, who retained his place by winning the New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final in Balclutha in February.

