

MEDIA RELEASE (captions at end)-This story corrects last par, to two 13-year-olds having previously won Golden Shears Novice title. Apols
From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand
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A shearing start is born – aged 14

A Taihape schoolboy today became one of the youngest shearers to claim a major shearing title when he won the Junior final at the New Zealand Shearing and Woolhandling Championships in Te Kuiti.

Reuben Alabaster, 14, dominated all-round to win a six-shearer final by 2.225pts from runner-up and 20-year-old Golden Shears Junior champion Brook Hamerton, from Ruawai, in Northland, in a reversal of their result at the Golden Shears in Masterton five weeks ago.

Alabaster was first today's showdown in the Waitomo Cultural and Arts Centre, taking 8min 27.34sec for the five second-shear sheep, beating Hamerton by 20 seconds.

But the youngster, a pupil at the years 1-13 Taihape Area School, also had the best job points on the shearing board and quality points in the pens out-back.

Third was Keith Swann, of Wairoa, and fourth was Pahiatua shearer Jonathan Painter, who despite being unable to claim either the Golden Shears or national championships titles still finished as Shearing Sports New Zealand's No 1-ranked Junior shearer for the season, based on points for placings in his 18 finals, which produced 7 wins.

A short while earlier today, Rakai Barrett, of Taumarunui, marked his first-ever shearing final with a commanding Novice title win. He shored his two sheep in 4min 31.49sec, more than 1min 20sec quicker than second-man-off and eventual runner-up Logan Kamura, of Marton.

Also claiming best quality points in the pen judging, Barrett beat Kamura by 3.68pts, with six more points to third placegetter Heath Barnsdall, of Pio Pio, who had already won four Novice finals in the last two months, at Aria, Kumeu, Waitomo and at the Royal Easter Show in Auckland last Saturday.

Fifth in the event last year and winner of six of 21 Junior finals, Alabaster has surpassed the dreams of dad Ricky, who despite concentrating mainly on farming and doing only one season of fulltime

shearing, shore in four New Zealand championships finals across the Junior, Intermediate and Senior grades.

He has a way to go to emulate cousin Sheree Alabaster, a 2008 World champion woolhandler who in a final tomorrow night will be hunting her eighth New Zealand Open Woolhandling Championship title, and to meet the legendary status of great-great uncle Ray Alabaster, who as a teenager shore at the first Golden Shears in 1961, twice finishing runner-up in a string of nine Golden Shears Open finals from 1971 to 1981.

There are possibly more on the Alabaster production line, Reuben the second-eldest of five children of Ricky and wife Evelyn, the others all girls.

“Heaps of rousies,” jokes his dad, who farms 18,000 ewes on four blocks in the Taihape area, two of them leased. “We need more shearers.”

His wife didn’t shear or work in the woolsheds, and eldest daughter Lily, 16, has started to learn, but little is known yet of the farm-life aspirations of Fleur, 10, Marselene, 5, and Clara, 4.

All, except Clara, of course, are at school, although Reuben has his future slowly mapping out with a handpiece ahead of textbooks.

Turning 15 in three weeks’ time, he goes up to Intermediate class next season, and having had only half-a-day’s shearing in the last month reckons he’ll do more and more around Taihape over the next couple of years before possibly starting to hit the road to shear further afield.

“I don’t like school much,” he said.

The youngest major show shearing title winners are thought to have been David Gordon, of Masterton, and Josh Balme, of Te Kuiti, who were each 13 when they won the Golden Shears Novice title in 2010 and 2012 respectively.

RESULTS of second-day afternoon session finals at the New Zealand Shering and Woolhandling Championships in Te Kuiti today (Friday):
Searing:

Junior final (5 sheep): Reuben Alabaster (Taihape) 8min 27.34sec, 33.767pts, 1; Brook Hamerton (Ruawai/Hastings) 8min 47.83sec, 35.992pts, 2; Keith Swann (Wairoa) 8min 59.14sec, 37.157pts, 3; Jonathan Painter (Pahiatua) 10min 9.72sec, 40.486pts, 4; Braydon

Clifford (Gore) 10min 6.43sec, 40.522pts, 5; Natalya Rangiawha (Raglan) 10min 36.58sec, 46.429pts, 6.

Novice final (2 sheep): Rakai Barrett (Taumarunui) 4min 31.49sec, 29.575pts, 1; Logan Kamura (Marton) 5min 55.09sec, 33.255pts, 2; Heath Barnsdall (Pio Pio) 9min 36.71sec, 39.836pts, 3; Kendra Paulsen (Waikaretu) 9min 51.54sec, 45.577pts, 4; Samantha Baxter (Pongaroa) 10min 8.29sec, 46.915pts, 5; Jerome Papworth (Eketahuna) 11min 3.6sec, 49.68pts, 6.

PHOTOS

Reuben Alabaster

Reuben Alabaster shearing his way to the New Zealand Junior championship title in Te Kuiti today. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

Reuben Alabaster1

The job's finished and the wait is on for Taihape teenager Reuben Alabaster with final pen-judging points to be added to confirm his win in the New Zealand Junior shearing championship final in Te Kuiti today. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ

Rakai Barrett

Rakai Barrett, of Taumarunui, winning his first shearing final, and claiming the New Zealand championship's Novice title in Te Kuiti today. PHOTO/Doug Laing SSNZ.





