

## MEDIA RELEASE

From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sport New Zealand  
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### Captions

Nathan Stratford

**SECOND CHANCE:** Nathan Stratford on the way to winning the PGG Wrightson Wool National Circuit final in 2014. The TAB rates him second-favourite to win again at the Golden Shears on March 3.

**PHOTO/GOLDEN SHEARS MEDIA**

### Open shearing

**LINING UP:** Finalists : Open shearing finalists from left and in order of placings at last month's Rotorua A and P Show - Rowland Smith, Gavin Mutch, John Kirkpatrick, Mark Grainger and Murray Henderson, all contenders for the March 3 Golden Shears Open final in which the TAB has rated Smith the hot favourite. **PHOTO/DOUG LAING SSNZ**

### Odds on Smith to retain Golden Shears title

The TAB has opened Golden Shears betting earlier than ever before amidst the contrasts between the two major shearing events at the 58<sup>th</sup> annual championships in Masterton on March 1-3.

At one end is the near unbeatable form of reigning Golden Shears Open champion Rowland Smith, encouraging the TAB to open with a Rowland Smith v The Field option as he seeks the title for a fifth time in six years.

Smith, with a sequence of 31 wins in Open finals in New Zealand since the end of January last year, is quoted at a warm \$1.27 – The Field at \$3.50. His only variations in the last year were when he was a semi-final elimination at Tauranga on January 14.

The PGG Wrightson Wool National Shearing Circuit, with 2017 winner Smith not among the entries, is however considered much wider open

with a comparatively even field amassing with still one qualifying event remaining before the 12 are decided for the title showdown.

The last of five qualifying events in the multi-wools event is at the Pahiatua Shears on February 25, after which the field of 17 will be cut to 12 for the semi-finals on the morning of March 3, deciding the top six for a final over 15 sheep of five different wool types later that day.

Qualifying points are based on placings during the heats of each round, but the semi-finals and finals are decided on the speed and quality, the winner being an automatic selection along with the Golden Shears Open in the 2018-2019 transtasman series, so long as they're eligible to represent New Zealand.

World teams champions John Kirkpatrick and Nathan Stratford are seen as the most likely to win the circuit final, 2013 winner Kirkpatrick opening favourite at \$2.25 and 2014 winner Stratford second-favourite at \$2.50.

The others are headed by Jack Fagan, trying to reach the final for the first time, and Masterton shearer Paerata Abraham who was fifth last year. The others include three other former finalists, including 1997 winner Dion Morrell, who with 9pts to date needs close to maximum points at Pahiatua to reach a place in the top 12, of whom 10 already have 20pts or more.

The TAB expects to be opening more options as entries firm closer to the Shears, including the Open woolhandling championship and transtasman shearing and woolhandling test matches, as entries firm closer to the event.

The Golden Shears is the biggest show of about 60 on the Shearing Sports New Zealand calendar, with major lead-up competitions being the Southern Shears in Gore tomorrow and Saturday (February 16-17), the Taumarunui Jamboree Shears on February 23, the Apiti Sports Shears on February 24, the Pahiatua Shears on February 25, and the Pre-Shears Woolhandling Championships on February 28.

PGG Wrightson Wool National Shearing Circuit TAB odds: \$2.25 John Kirkpatrick; \$2.50 Nathan Stratford; \$7.00 Jack Fagan; \$8.00 Paerata Abraham; \$10.00 Ringakaha Paewai; \$12 David Buick, Colin O'Neill and Grant Smith; \$15 Staey Te Huia; \$17 Troy Pyper; \$21 Ethan

Pankhurst and Ant Frew; \$51 Dion Morrell; \$101 Turi Edmonds; \$151  
Andy Mainland; \$251 Evan Johnson and Leon Samuels.  
ENDS

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