

Thursday February 28 2008

COUNTY Antrim shearer Darrin McKinty heats up the hand piece at New Zealand's premier shearing contest today, the Golden Shears 2008.

McKinty, 23, from Ballynure near Carrickfergus, Co. Antrim, was looking long and lean and pretty Kiwi after a season in the sheds of New Zealand's North Island.

While McKinty didn't make the final of the Junior Shearing Event, he said he enjoyed his time under the bright lights of the competition stands.

"I always wanted to shear in the Golden Shears. A few of my friends back home had been in it and they sort of pushed me to do it...the best in the world are here," he said.

"It's pretty intense. You don't think the stand is so high until you get up there. I was happy enough but I know I could have done better."

McKinty said he loved the shearing life and would be back in New Zealand next season.

He said he'd definitely compete in the Golden Shears again if he had the chance.

McKinty shears for gun kiwi shearer Dean Ball in New Zealand and R and S Shearing when at home in Antrim.

The Golden Shears runs from Thursday February 28 to Saturday March 1 and sees competitors from New Zealand, Norway, Australia, the UK, Ireland, Canada, and South Africa battle for the top titles.

It is a favourite fixture of the New Zealand rural calendar in a country whose national identity is strongly linked to its rural industries, especially wool growing.

For a full programme and live video action see [www.goldenshears.co.nz](http://www.goldenshears.co.nz).

For free images or further information contact the Golden Shears Media Group at [goldenshears@pete.co.nz](mailto:goldenshears@pete.co.nz) or phone 0061 21 488 137 or 0061 27 5788 137.