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Shears Stronger Than Ever

THE GOLDEN Shears' half century of existence is more than enough proof for former champion John Allan that competitive shearing is here to stay.

The 74 year old veteran shearer is over from Australia this week to celebrate the 50th anniversary, catching up with long-time industry friends and enjoying soaking up the atmosphere in an event he believes is more popular than it has ever been.

"I think (the competition) is getting better, I think it's getting stronger. You wouldn't get any of these young blokes if they didn't think it was credible."

This comes from a man whose handpiece skills have had him rank top in his field, seen him shear in 14 different countries and led to his fascinating story being captured in the biography "Shear Magic: The John Allan Story".

John was in fact the first ever Golden Shears intermediate shearing champion back at the inaugural competition in 1961, fifty years ago. He had been shearing in the South Island prior to the event and was so captivated by the Shears that he came back the next year with a team of Australians to challenge the Kiwis.

"That was the first Australian team to be sent, back in 1962. I invited a team of Aussies, the Kiwis picked a team, we had a match and that's how it began," John said.

"The Kiwis used to say to us "You fellows don't shear enough to make a good stew" and we would always answer back "Yeah but you can shear those cross-breed sheep of yours with a forked stick".

That rivalry has become a solid part of the Golden Shears over its fifty-year history. In addition to the many Australians that compete in shearing and woolhandling events each year, the trans-Tasman shearing test between Shearing Sports NZ and Sports Shear Australia is now in its fourteenth year. Earlier test series were also held in the '60s and '70s.

In terms of John's personal performance, he opted out of today's veteran contest having not shorn a sheep for 30 years. But there's no doubt he'll be supporting veterans from the stands and also making his presence known at the Golden Shears 50th anniversary dinner tonight.

For more information and free higher resolution images contact the Golden Shears media group at goldenshears@pete.co.nz or phone 021 488 137. International callers phone 0064 21 488 137.

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