

Wednesday 3 March, 2010

SHEARS BETS PROVING POPULAR

BETS are coming in hard and fast for this year's 50th Golden Shears annual shearing and woolhandling championships as play kicks off in Masterton's War Memorial Stadium today.

Hawkes Bay shearer John Kirkpatrick currently holds pole position as favourite to win the Open Shearing Final, a place he also held at the same time last year. He's currently paying \$2.70, putting him \$1.30 ahead of his closest rivals, two-time Golden Shears title holder Paul Avery of Taranaki and last year's winner and shearing legend David Fagan of Te Kuiti.

The TAB opened up betting for the Golden Shears two weeks ago in an effort to give the event more exposure. They have also widened betting opportunities to cater for increased interest in the event, which is considered to be the pinnacle of international shearing and woolhandling.

In addition to the traditional Open Shearing winner stakes, punters can now put their money on the Top 3 finalists, Head to Head play offs between the top six shearing favourites, and the Trans-Tasman Shearing Test.

"The trans-Tasman test has been quiet popular," said TAB shearing bookie Kieran McAnulty.

"We thought we'd give that one a bit more exposure because it has been shared by both countries over the past eight years and New Zealand are the hot favourites."

Himself a Masterton man, Kieran said the Shears are something he is personally interested in and he will be following events with a keen eye.

"There are not many people who grew up in Masterton who don't have an interest in the Shears."

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