

# Sherwood, Speirs rewarded



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TAI CWAN-DO ATTITUDE: Sportswomen of the year Estelle Speirs with her partner Kane Baigent who won coach of the year.

## Relevant offers

Freestyle motocross rider Levi Sherwood made up for not being nominated last year by being supreme winner at the Manawatu Sportsperson of the Year Awards.

Sherwood was named the sportsman of the year and the overall sportsperson of the year when the gongs were handed out at the Awapuni Function Centre last night.

The judges may have had a guilty conscience after Sherwood didn't even register last year when he won the Red Bull X-Fighters world tour, as well as a silver medal in Moto X Freestyle event at the X Games in Los Angeles.

This year he had an injury-disrupted season and finished only fifth in the X-Fighters and fourth at the X Games.

He did have multiple top five placings with a second and third in Mexico and Dubai.

The 22-year-old wasn't able to receive the award last night because he is at the Big Boys Toys show in Auckland, but had his uncle Robin and aunt Denise collect it on his behalf.

The sportsman was a tough category this year, with All Blacks Aaron Smith and Aaron Cruden contenders, as well as speedway legend Peter Rees.

Top road cyclist Jesse Sergent wasn't even a finalist.

Taekwondo was the surprise winner in two of the other major categories, picking up the sportswoman and coach of the year awards.

Estelle Speirs was the sportswoman after she was the first New Zealand women to win a gold medal in sparring at a world event, at the 2012 World Cup.

She was the most experienced female in the New Zealand team that went to the world championships in Spain last month, with five World Championships and one World Cup behind her.

"It's really awesome being a minority sport," the 26-year-old said, having been nominated for the award a few times previously.

Speirs' club-mate and partner Kane Baigent was the coach of the year for all the work he does with the Palmerston North Taekwondo Academy.

Also one of New Zealand's top male taekwondo fighters, he coached Speirs to her world championships gold medal and has enjoyed success at both national and regional level.

Both former Massey Blues, Speirs said it was nice to come home to as they only arrived back from the world championships in Spain on Thursday.

"It's really cool to see him recognised."

Speirs did well to beat new Silver Fern netballer Te Huinga Reo Selby-Rickit and New Zealand sevens rugby players Selica Winiata and Sarah Goss.

Feilding High School girls 1st XV rugby coach Rob Jones was unlucky not to win the coaching award as he has guided the school into becoming a national powerhouse.

Table tennis player Natalie Paterson was named junior sportswoman after she was in the New Zealand women's team that competed at the Commonwealth Championships in India and the World University Games in Russia.

Another contender was Black Stick hockey player Michaela Curtis.

Levin golfer Tyler Hodge won his second junior sportsperson of the year award in a row, having won the world men's lefthanders championships in Turkey, finished 56th in the New Zealand Open and second with the New Zealand team at the 10 Nations Cup.

Rugby league player Ngani Laumape, who had a good season with the Warriors in the NRL, and New Zealand under-20 rugby players Nick Grogan and Jason Emery would have been close.

New Zealand women's sevens vice-captain Sarah Goss won the personality of the year, which is decided on public vote.

Part of the New Zealand team that won the world series and World Cup, as well as an accomplished shearer, she beat out hard-case cyclist Colin Anderson, football administrator Jason Flynn and national speedway champion Peter Rees.

Vanessa Story won the masters sportsperson of the year award in athletics, having been to the past two world masters games.

Conrad Ryan was named the disabled sportsperson of the year for Special Olympics, where he competes in a range of sports and went to the Special Olympics Winter World Games in Korea.

Palmerston North FIFA football referee Matthew Conger was the official of the year and Peter Butler was administrator of the year for his work in rugby league.

The Feilding High School girls 1st XV rugby team won the award for best team after winning back-to-back national secondary school titles and winning the secondary schools sevens.

They did well to beat the Manawatu women's sevens team who won their first national title in January.

Esmee Rowden was inducted into the Manawatu Legends of Sport for her long service to hockey.