



# Excavator champ back to Field Days

**SAM KILMISTER**

Manawatu's premier excavator operator is honing his egg-carrying and slam-dunk skills as he prepared for next week's National Excavator Operator Competition.

Former civil construction engineer Sam Scott spent about five years working with diggers before having a change of heart and becoming a police officer in 2011.

While painting a few numbers, pouring a cup of tea and slam-dunking a basketball don't sound like difficult tasks, they can get a little complicated when your hand is the arm of a 12-tonne digger.

While he now works for the Palmerston North police he clearly hasn't lost any of his skills, winning the Manawatu competition in November at the AMP Showground in Feilding.

He will now go back to Feilding to join the winners from eight other regions after booking himself a place in the national final held during the Central Districts Field Days.

Among the competition is last year's defending champion Steve Galbraith from Hawke's Bay. The group will battle it out at Manfeild

Park on March 17 to 18.

Competition manager Malcolm Abernethy said the national competition was an intense two-day event comprising four elements.

The main course sees competitors complete 12 to 15 activities in 60 minutes using a 12-tonne Hitachi excavator. This includes pouring a cup of tea, carrying a fresh egg, slam dunking a ball and a series of excavation exercises.

The emergency scenario has contestants responding to a realistic emergency situation involving first-aid skills and emergency response.

The 'Gerald the Giraffe, the Cable Price Digger' event will judge drivers on how well they brief young children, as young as 2, to operate Gerald, a 1.7-tonne Hitachi mini digger.

The final element is the 'One Day Job' where they must construct something using a 5-tonne machine. It is equivalent to a full-day task, but must be completed in 60 minutes.

"It's a fantastic event to watch," Abernethy said. "It's incredible seeing a large digger undertaking detailed, intricate

tasks such as pouring a cup of tea.

"Younger children have the opportunity to learn to operate a 1.7-tonne excavator Gerald the Giraffe, for a gold coin donation raising money for Child Cancer. It's a family event."

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**Sam Scott will compete in the National Excavator Competition.**

PHOTO: LEILANI HATCH/ FAIRFAX NZ.