



CLINT BOWYER

Advice for Rookie Teammate Cole Custer

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Feb. 26, 2020) – Clint Bowyer has some interesting advice for rookie teammate Cole Custer, who makes his NASCAR Cup Series debut at his home track of Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California this weekend.

The 22-year-old native of Ladera Ranch, California is Bowyer's newest teammate at SHR joining the driver lineup that includes veterans Kevin Harvick and Aric Almirola. Bowyer's rookie year in the Cup series came in 2006 season, when he drove the No. 07 car at Richard Childress Racing.

"I don't remember any of it," joked Bowyer. "I was sponsored by Jack Daniels and that was kind of a fog area in my life, as a matter of fact. So, first thing I would tell him is stay off of the bottle."

Bowyer actually does remember that season.

"He'll have this, the shock of looking over, 'Oh my gosh, that's Jeff Gordon, that's Tony Stewart,' and then all of a sudden I remember I'm fixing to pass Tony Stewart. 'What is going on here?' And, you know, and then all of a sudden I'm racing Tony Stewart!

"That is a critical moment in which you need to realize you're a rookie, realize the situation you're in and get the hell out of Dodge or they're going to just teach you a lesson. That will happen in his rookie season. Be ready for it. You know one or two things are going to happen. You're going to learn from it or you're going to bull up and you're going to make it hard on yourself. I did both. There's no question I did both."

Bowyer said Custer will go through all the trials every other driver goes through to establish himself in the Cup Series, but the key for Custer and any of the notable full-time Cup Series rookies in 2020 is to remain confident.

"You can't lose your confidence because that's exactly what's going to happen," Bowyer said. "Racing is all – competition is all about confidence, and the first thing that they're going to try to take from you is your confidence. You have to stay confident, you have to stay focused on the prize and you have to set realistic goals.

"Cole has come out of the Xfinity Series. He won a ton of races last year. That's exactly what his lifestyle and his brain is trained to think is going to happen. Might happen. But you've got to be ready to set realistic goals and not think you're just going to go out there and dominate every lap and every race. When that happens, when you think that is going to happen, the next thing you know you're 10 feet over your head and you wreck, and then you take it all away. Now you've knocked that confidence down a notch and another notch and another notch. Now you're trying even harder than you ever were before. Now it's another notch. Now you've rock bottomed and you're lost."

Bowyer doesn't have to worry about confidence going to Auto Club Speedway. He finished sixth at the season-opening Daytona 500 and 12th at Las Vegas Motor Speedway last weekend. His SHR No. 14 Ford is 13th in points coming in to Sunday's race at the ultra-fast, 2-mile California oval where cars are often four- and even five-wide as they battle for all-important track position once the green flag flies.

Drivers know that it's easier to gain spots in the opening laps than later in the run, when passing is most difficult.

"The restarts at California have always been awesome," said Bowyer, who added that drivers can choose from among five different racing lines on the D-shaped oval. "I think it's great for the fans. As a driver, you think I should get up there and race and get as many positions as I can. But, part of you is thinking that maybe I should just be safe this early in the race, hang back a bit and make sure we survive. Problem is, if you hang back and they don't wreck, you feel stupid."

Bowyer's No. 14 Mustang will carry the logos of Rush Truck Centers and Haas Automation this weekend. Rush has been the primary partner for the No. 14 team since Bowyer arrived at SHR in 2017 and has been with the organization since 2010. The Texas-based company has used Bowyer and the team to appeal to NASCAR fans as one way to recruit the technicians it needs to operate the largest network of commercial truck and bus dealerships in the country, with locations in 22 states. According to Rush Truck Centers, the trucking industry is expected to need 200,000 diesel technicians over the next 10 years to keep up with maintenance demands.

Rush Truck Centers wants to make NASCAR fans aware of these opportunities and knows that, with Bowyer's background working in his dad's towing service in Emporia Kansas, he understands the importance of keeping trucks up and running. That is why Rush is proud to partner with Bowyer and support the trucks that haul the racecars as well as customers across the country with its total service management package, RushCare Complete. This all-inclusive solution provides dedicated concierge service, vehicle telematics, mobile service, express routine maintenance, real-time service updates and a comprehensive source for all-makes parts.

Haas Automation, owned by SHR co-owner and California native Gene Haas, is America's leading builder of CNC machine tools. Founded by Haas in 1983, Haas Automation manufactures a complete line of vertical and horizontal machining centers, turning centers and rotary tables and indexers. All Haas products are built in the company's 1.1-million-square-foot manufacturing facility in nearby Oxnard, California, and distributed through a worldwide network of Haas Factory Outlets

"I know Rush and Haas will have a lot of guests this weekend," Bowyer said. "I'd love nothing better than to give them a good run. Heck, I'd let the Haas folks take the trophy back to Oxnard if we win it."

CLINT BOWYER, Driver of the No. 14 Rush Truck Centers/Haas Automation Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

What are your thoughts on Auto Club Speedway?

"The speeds are always very fast at California and, on top of that, the grip level goes away drastically fast. For me, I love that. I love how the track slicks off and you have to focus on the balance. You can't have that front end turning too good and have that rear end pulling out from under you, and vice versa."

What are your thoughts about SHR co-owner and California native Gene Haas?

"Everybody knows what Tony (Stewart) brought to the table. Gene is that rock. He is the rock behind all of us. That enables us to go out and perform at our best. It's never a question of, 'What does it take financially?' or anything else. It's, 'What does it take to win?' What does it take to be better? What does it take to find victory lane?' Those are the questions Gene Haas asks and that's it. He doesn't talk about, 'Well, that was a good top-10 finish.' You can be proud of a good run somewhere. Maybe that was a track you struggle at, maybe you run fifth or sixth – no call. Winning and winning only is what he does in his industry. It bleeds through to his employees and everybody at Stewart-Haas Racing."

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