



# COLE CUSTER

## Heading Home to California

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Feb. 25, 2020) – The 2020 NASCAR Cup Series ventures to California this weekend for Sunday’s 400-mile race at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana. Cole Custer will pilot the No. 41 Haas Automation/Production Alliance Group Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) at the 2-mile oval.

Auto Club Speedway is the second of three races in the 2020 West Coast Swing. Last weekend, Custer raced at Las Vegas Motor Speedway, where he started 17<sup>th</sup> after Saturday qualifying was cancelled due to weather and the starting grid was set by owners points, per the NASCAR rule book. The 22-year-old went two laps down at one point in the 267-lap event at the 1.5-mile track, but he was able to return to the lead lap and ultimately finished 19<sup>th</sup> in the Production Alliance Group/Haas Automation Mustang. The result bettered Custer’s previous Las Vegas Cup Series finish of 25<sup>th</sup>.

Custer, who is from Ladera Ranch, California, which is located approximately 50 miles south of Fontana, will be making his first Cup Series start at his home track. Two hours west of Fontana, at I-10 Speedway in Blythe, California, Custer won three Late Model stock car events at age 14 in 2012 to become the track’s youngest Late Model winner.

Riding along on the No. 41 Ford Mustang this weekend are two California companies – Haas Automation based in Oxnard, and Production Alliance Group, based in Tustin.

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

Production Alliance Group (PAG) will share the No. 41 livery with Haas Automation for the second weekend in a row. PAG is a premium live-event and creative development company. The company’s creative works can be seen at concerts, award shows, sporting events, or corporate events. From the lights to the sound and everything in-between, PAG is the creativity and execution behind it all.

What makes the PAG relationship unique with the No. 41 team is that its President and CEO Dale Sahlin met Custer in victory lane at Auto Club Speedway after Custer won the Production Alliance Group 300 NASCAR Xfinity Series race there last March. Sahlin and Custer formed a relationship, which led to PAG increasing its presence within NASCAR to SHR’s Xfinity Series program last season and now to the Cup Series.

Custer has three Fontana appearances in the Xfinity Series, all of which he started within the top-four. He started third in last year’s race and led 29 laps on his way to his first victory at his home track. He took the checkered flag 1.927 seconds ahead of second-place finisher, Kyle Busch.

Even though Custer had a trio of starts in the Cup Series in 2018, 2020 officially marks his Rookie of the Year campaign in NASCAR’s most prestigious series. He’s competing with notables Christopher Bell and Tyler Reddick, and the three have battled against each other in the Xfinity Series and are making the full-time transition to the Cup Series together. Custer was the second-highest-finishing rookie at Las Vegas last weekend with his 19<sup>th</sup>-place finish.

In addition to last year’s win with Custer at Fontana, No. 41 team crew chief Mike Shiplett also won the 2017 Xfinity Series race with driver Kyle Larson. The veteran crew chief led Custer to a career-high seven wins in 2019 Xfinity Series competition – second-most in the series. In total, the crew chief from Amherst, Ohio added six poles with Custer, 17 top-five finishes and 24 top-10s, and 922 laps led in 2019.

*Cole Custer, Driver of the No. 41 Haas Automation/Production Alliance Group Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:*

**What do you like about racing at your home track, Auto Club Speedway?**

“We won in the Xfinity car there last year, so that was pretty cool. It’s a great track because you’re moving around so much, slipping and sliding.”

**What is your most embarrassing moment in a car, be it a racecar or a regular street car?**

“I do not have the best track record on the actual road – I’ve been in a couple of car accidents. I hit somebody in a parking lot once at school, and it was bad because everybody saw it. The lady was yelling at me and I think that is probably the one that sticks out the most.”

**How are you going to shine among the strong rookie class this year?**

“For me, it’s just focusing on myself and whatever problems I encounter, and learning the most that I can. I know I’m not going to do everything perfectly. I’m just going to take it one step at a time.”

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