



COLE CUSTER

First Intermediate Track of Season

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Feb. 19, 2020) – The 2020 NASCAR Cup Series heads to Las Vegas Motor Speedway for the second race of the season. Cole Custer will pilot the No. 41 Production Alliance Group/Haas Automation Ford Mustang for this weekend’s event in Nevada. A 2020 schedule change means the Cup Series heads to Las Vegas one week earlier than usual. Over the past several years, Atlanta Motor Speedway was the second race of the season.

Las Vegas is the first of three races as part of NASCAR’s West Coast swing. Vegas is the first 1.5-mile facility of the season for Custer and the No. 41 team. The 22-year-old has made one start at the intermediate track in the Cup Series. In 2018, he made three Cup Series starts in the No. 51 with Rick Ware Racing and finished 25th at Las Vegas.

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’ll compete with notables Christopher Bell and Tyler Reddick, all of whom have battled against each other in the Xfinity Series and are making the fulltime transition to the Cup Series together.

The 62nd Annual Daytona 500 last weekend was the Ladera Ranch, California, native’s first Daytona 500. Custer started the prestigious race from the 12th position and ran as high as second before his night ended prematurely due to a mechanical issue. While the 37th-place result is disappointing, this weekend’s race at Las Vegas provides the opportunity to rebound for the No. 41 Mustang team. The Stewart-Haas Racing driver has spent multiple hours in the racing simulator in preparation for the Las Vegas race weekend.

In the Xfinity Series at Las Vegas, Custer has five starts with three consecutive pole awards – September 2018 and both 2019 events. In total, he has two top-five and four top-10 finishes, along with 54 laps led at the mile-and-a-half venue. The Ford driver has an average starting position of 5.4 and an average finishing position of 7.2. Custer also has one Vegas start in the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series. In October 2016, he started and finished in the third position and led three laps.

This weekend the No. 41 machine will have a different look. Production Alliance Group (PAG) will share the No. 41 livery with Haas Automation for the first time this season. PAG is a premium live-event and creative development company based in Tustin, California. If you’ve ever been to a concert, award show, sporting event, or corporate event chances are you’ve seen PAG in action. From the lights to the sound, and everything in-between, PAG is the creative mind and execution behind it all.

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

Haas Automation, founded in 1983 by Stewart-Haas Racing 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 manufacturing facility in Oxnard, California and distributed through a worldwide network of Haas Factory Outlets.

No. 41 team crew chief Mike Shiplett has two wins at Las Vegas in the Xfinity Series, both in 2018. 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 Production Alliance Group/Haas Automation Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

Daytona is a bit of an anomaly, but will the West Coast swing of races – Vegas, Fontana, Phoenix – be the litmus test to see where everybody stands before returning to the East Coast?

“Yeah, it feels like the West Coast swing is always kind of a good telltale sign of where you're at as an organization. I guess. You get through Daytona but you don't know exactly how things are going to go through your season. But, once you get to the West Coast swing, you really start to figure out who your toughest competition is going to be.”

I know you're a Cup Series rookie, but you've been in NASCAR for a number of years now. When did you say, ‘You know what? I can make a career out of this?’

“I think when I won in New Hampshire in the Truck Series. That was a pretty big one. I won in the top three series, so it was pretty surreal and kind of the turning point where I was like, ‘I think I could maybe do this.’ So, New Hampshire was probably the biggest one for me.”

Your rookie class is pretty strong this year. What is it like to be with the guys you battled for Xfinity race wins and championships for? You all graduated from the Xfinity Series to the Cup Series together.

“It's pretty cool. I mean, it's going to be a cool fight to race with those guys all year. At the same time though, you're racing 37 other guys, so you've kind of just got to put that aside and focus on what you've got to do. But, I think it's going to be exciting to see the points battle every single week.”

LAS VEGAS MOTOR SPEEDWAY (1.5-mile oval)

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2018	3/4	Las Vegas 400	30	25	Running, 264/267	0	N/A

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