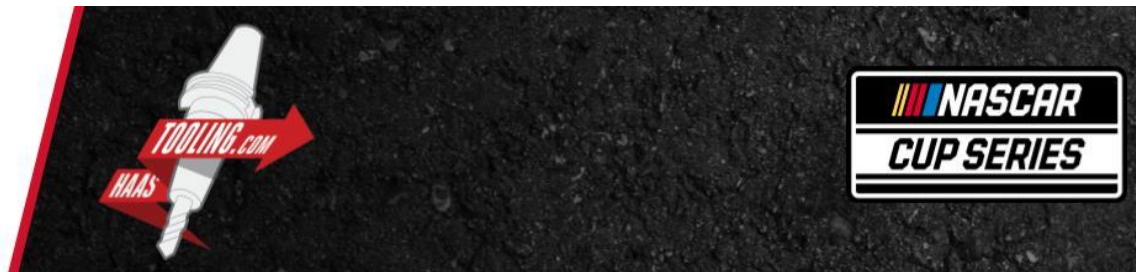


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Darlington Night Race Ends with 31st-Place Finish for Custer

Damage Ruins Race for Rookie Driver

Date: May 20, 2020
Event: Darlington 500k
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Darlington (S.C.) Raceway (1.366-mile oval)
Format: 228 laps, broken into three stages (60 laps/65 laps/103 laps)
Start/Finish: 22nd/31st (Running, completed 206 of 208 laps)
Point Standing: 24th with 88 points, 170 out of first

Race Winner: Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)
Stage 1 Winner: Clint Bowyer of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)
Stage 2 Winner: Clint Bowyer of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-60):

- Cole Custer started 22nd and finished 17th.
- Custer climbed to 18th in the opening laps reporting his HaasTooling.com Mustang was a little loose.
- During the lap-25 competition caution Custer pitted his Ford for fuel, four tires and adjustments to help his tight condition. He restarted 17th on lap 31.
- The HaasTooling.com Mustang ended the stage 17th.
- A penalty for an uncontrolled tire during the stage break pit stop sent Custer to the rear of the field for the start of Stage 2.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 61-125):

- Custer started 30th and finished 34th.
- The 22-year-old pitted from 28th for fuel, four tires and adjustments to help with his tight-handling Mustang at lap 72.
- Custer moved from 23rd to fifth when he stayed on the track during the lap 83 caution.
- The California native made contact with the outside wall on lap 107, bringing out a caution.
- He pitted twice to make repairs on the damage on the right side and change four tires.
- Custer restarted 32nd on lap 112, one lap down and completed the stage 34th, one lap down.
- The HaasTooling.com driver pitted during the Stage 2 break for more repairs to his Mustang.

Final Stage Recap (Laps 126-208):

- Custer started 34th and finished 31st.
- Custer lost a second lap during the long green flag run to open the stage.
- With the caution out on lap 179 he pitted from 33rd for four tires, fuel and adjustments.
- The rookie driver restarted 32nd on lap 186 and was 33rd at the lap 195 caution.
- The final caution was displayed for an accident on lap 201 with Custer in the 33rd spot.
- Rain ended the race on lap 208 - 20 laps short of the schedule distance.

Notes:

- Custer made his ninth career NASCAR Cup Series start and just his second at Darlington.
- This was the first NASCAR Cup Series race to be held on a Wednesday in 36 years. The last time: July 4, 1984 when Richard Petty scored his 200th career victory at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.
- Denny Hamlin won the Darlington 500k to score his 39th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his second of the season and his third at Darlington.
- There were 11 caution periods for a total of 54 laps.
- Only 23 of the 39 drivers in the Darlington 500k finished on the lead lap.
- Harvick remains the championship leader after Darlington with a two-point advantage over second-place Joey Logano.

Cole Custer, driver of the No. 41 HaasTooling.com Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

“We definitely a lot better to start tonight at Darlington in the HaasTooling.com Mustang. We just had some bad luck with getting a Darlington stripe and the damage from hitting the wall made for a long night.”

Next Up:

The next event on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule is the Coca-Cola 600 on Sunday, May 24 at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway. The race starts at 6 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by FOX and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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