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COLE CUSTER

Tackling the Martinsville Paper Clip

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (June 8, 2020) – The No. 41 HaasTooling.com/Jacob Construction Ford Mustang team and driver Cole Custer make the two-hour jaunt from Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) headquarters in Kannapolis, North Carolina, to Martinsville (Va.) Speedway for Wednesday night’s Blue-Emu Maximum Pain Relief 500. Custer will make his first Cup Series start at the Virginia track and his 14th career Cup Series start, all while the track hosts its first Cup Series night race.

The No. 41 Ford Mustang will once again sport the colors of co-owner Gene Haas’ newest holding, HaasTooling.com, for the 500-lap event. [Haas Tooling](#) was launched last month as a way for CNC machinists to purchase high quality cutting tools at great prices. Haas’ cutting tools are sold exclusively online at HaasTooling.com and shipped directly to end users.

In addition to HaasTooling.com on the car this weekend, Jacob Construction debuts with its first race of the 2020 Cup Series season. Jacob is a multifaceted construction firm with a focus on construction, development, design and technology services. Jacob provides clients with a wide range of services in the design build and construction management sectors of the construction industry. In conjunction with these services, Jacob self performs structural concrete, architectural and structural precast erection.

In his most recent outing Sunday at Atlanta Motor Speedway, Custer was originally slated to start 31st in the HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang but was relegated to start at the rear of the field for an unapproved prerace adjustment. Custer battled a loose-handling No. 41 machine at Atlanta for most of the day, but was able to maintain a top-20 position for most of the race. After the grueling 325-lap race, the HaasTooling.com driver ended the day with a 19th-place result.

With Martinsville not on the Xfinity Series schedule when Custer raced in that series, it has been four years since he’s raced at the Southern Virginia track. He had a total of six Martinsville starts from 2014 through 2016 in the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoor Truck Series. The California native earned the pole position in October 2015 with a speed of 96.959 mph. In total, he has one top-five finish and two top-10s, along with 115 laps led in the Truck Series at Martinsville. “We were always extremely fast, we got a pole, led a bunch of laps,” Custer said. “I just haven’t ever gotten the (grandfather) clock (trophy). That’s always been something that’s nagged at me, not getting that clock.”

For the seventh time since the Cup Series returned to action after a 70-day hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cup Series drivers will climb into their powerful stock cars without any practice Wednesday night. Even though it makes the racing process very efficient, it has been tough on rookie drivers like Custer, who could use the valuable track time to hone their skills in the Cup Series. “I’m looking forward to seeing what it’s like in the Cup car,” said Custer, who will be making his first start of any kind at Martinsville since 2016.

SHR has 70 starts and four wins at the at the short track nestled in the Virginia mountains – team co-owner Tony Stewart in 2011, Ryan Newman in 2012, Kurt Busch in 2014 and Clint Bowyer in 2018. The championship team has one pole award, a total of 10 top-fives and 29 top-10s, along with 720 laps led at Martinsville.

While the NASCAR season has resumed, the sport also continues to do its part during the COVID-19 pandemic. SHR’s partnership with Novant Health continues to expand. So far, SHR has helped transport and deliver millions of face masks for Novant, in addition to building intensive care unit webcam carts. Now, SHR is now providing 25,000 square feet of property adjacent to its shop in Kannapolis, North Carolina, for Novant’s partnership with Zipline, the world’s only national-scale, on-demand drone logistics service. Zipline will deliver medical supplies via its fleet of drones to Novant Health’s integrated system of physician practices, hospitals and outpatient centers. [Click here to download b-roll of site build, drone delivery and interviews.](#)

Haas Automation, founded by Haas in 1983, 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.

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 for rookie honors with notables Christopher Bell and Tyler Reddick. The three have battled against each other in the Xfinity Series and are making the full-time transition to the Cup Series together.

Cole Custer, Driver of the No. 41 HaasTooling.com/Jacob Construction Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

Atlanta was the first really hot race of the year and we saw several worn-out drivers after the race. How difficult is it to turn your body around, if you will, when you have two races per week versus just one?

"It's definitely that time of the year where it's hot out and slick, and extremely hot in the car. It's definitely going to show up if you're not hydrated or you're a little bit off on your fitness. I think all of the work you've put in during the week is really going to start showing up. Staying hydrated and being able to hydrate in such a short amount of time is extremely hard since we're doing races so close together. You really have to get rehydrated right after the race and work hard to keep yourself hydrated."

Martinsville wasn't on the Xfinity Series schedule when you raced in that series. The last time you were there was 2016 in the Truck Series. Any idea what to expect?

"Martinsville is a place I haven't been to in four years because Xfinity never went there, so I'm really looking forward to going back. In the truck, it was always a place I absolutely loved going to. I'm sure it's going to be different, but I think it's going to be the same old Martinsville. It's a small track where you're beating and banging. Hopefully, we can have a strong run."

Do you think a short track like Martinsville levels the playing field a little bit because it's a little more about rooting and gouging your way forward, versus needing to have a perfect-handling car to advance positions?

"I think it evens the field out some because it's something that we all grew up doing. It probably evens the cars out a little bit because there is less aero and more mechanical grip. From a driver's standpoint, it's something we've all done since we first started racing at short tracks. Not having to deal with the aero side of things with the cars driving differently on bigger tracks, I think it does even it out a little bit."

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