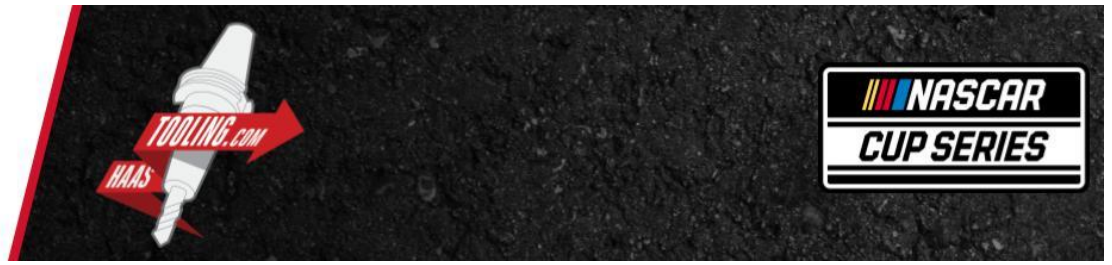


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COLE CUSTER

Looking To Make Progress at Pocono

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (June 24, 2020) – For the first time in its modern era, the NASCAR Cup Series heads to a racetrack for a scheduled weekend doubleheader, when Cole Custer and the No. 41 HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) tackle Pocono (Pa.) Raceway for races Saturday and Sunday. It will be the second and third career Cup Series starts for Custer at the 2.5-mile triangle.

“There is a lot of planning for the teams to accomplish two consecutive days of racing,” Custer said. “It’s going to be interesting to see how we manage all of that. Usually, when you end a race, you want to go back and run that race again right away. We’ll actually have that chance to do that this time.”

The 22-year-old’s No. 41 Mustang will be adorned with co-owner Gene Haas’ newest holding, HaasTooling.com, for both races this weekend. [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.

Custer’s only previous Cup Series start at Pocono was in June 2018 while piloting the No. 51 Rick Ware Racing entry. Custer qualified 28th and finished 26th in that 400-mile event. “I do have a one Cup start at Pocono and it was a long time ago,” Custer said. “I think I’ve learned a lot since then and the cars are extremely different now. So it’s hard to say I learned a ton from that, but it’s obviously still the same racetrack.”

In three NASCAR Xfinity Series outings at Pocono, Custer has an average starting position of 1.7, which includes two pole awards – June 2018 with a speed of 161.423 mph and June 2019 with a speed of 170.707 mph. His average Xfinity Series finishing position there is 4.3 with one victory earned last year by a .226-of-a-second margin of victory. “Pocono was always good for me in the Xfinity Series,” Custer said. “I think I had a good idea and understanding of the track and what I wanted the car to do. I had some great cars, too, which led to success. Hopefully, some of that success transfers over to the Cup Series and we can have some good runs this weekend.”

Custer most recently raced at Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway Monday after Sunday’s scheduled event was postponed due to rain. From his starting position of 28th, the rookie driver ran inside the top-five and top-10 at the 2.66-mile track. A late-race caution resulted in NASCAR overtime and Custer was set to restart fifth for the first attempt at a green-white-checked finish when he felt his Ford Mustang stumble. Custer dove onto pit road for a splash of fuel while the rest of the field took the green flag. The California native ended up finishing the day 22nd after a strong run at the superspeedway.

In the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series at Pocono, Custer has made one start, starting 16th and finishing fifth in July 2016.

SHR has 70 starts at Pocono, with five pole awards and two wins earned by team co-owner Tony Stewart in June 2009 and Kurt Busch in June 2016. In total at the “Tricky Triangle,” SHR has 23 top-fives and 36 top-10s, along with 448 laps led.

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 Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

In theory, one nice thing about two consecutive races at the same track is you can immediately apply what you learned on Saturday to Sunday. Do you think that's a positive thing? Or is it typically nicer to have a break between races to really have some time to sift through the information you just learned?

"I think it's made it a little more relaxed going into this kind of weekend where, before, it was going to be a lot of unknowns where we've never raced two days in a row like this without much practice and everything like that. But we've been racing multiple times a week now that it's not a huge curveball for us. It just feels like another week now. It's definitely going to be a little bit tough, a little bit different, preparing the cars for two days in a row, and getting yourself ready for that. At the same time, we've been doing these races without any practice and I think we all have a good rhythm for it now."

How do you feel about encountering this kind of schedule as a rookie?

"I think it will be nice, as a rookie, to rerun the race you just ran the next day. You'll be able to improve on what you just did the day before and really be able to attack the next day, and have a good feel for the track and know what to expect. It's going to be really nice for us to get a feel for it and the next day be able to really attack it."

Pocono is really one of the more unique tracks you go to. Do you really like racing that style of track? Why or why not?

"It's a tough track to get around. I think everybody loves it because it's a challenge. It's a place where no corner is the same, they're all really difficult corners and one of those styles of tracks you haven't seen a bunch before. It's a triangle and you don't ever race at other tracks shaped like that. There's nothing like it."

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