



COLE CUSTER

Looking To Succeed on a Superspeedway

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (June 18, 2020) – With its sights set on a strong weekend, the No. 41 Autodesk Fusion 360/HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang team for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) heads to Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway for the second superspeedway race of the season. Rookie Cole Custer will make his first NASCAR Cup Series start at the 2.66-mile Alabama track in Sunday’s GEICO 500. Sunday’s race also marks Custer’s 16th career Cup Series race.

Custer’s No. 41 Ford Mustang will share the Autodesk Fusion 360 livery with HaasTooling.com. Autodesk is a leading designer and supplier of software for the architecture, engineering, construction, media and entertainment, and manufacturing industries. [Autodesk’s Fusion 360](#) cloud-based 3D CAD, CAM, CAE, and PCB software brings enterprise-grade capabilities, data services, and a support network to teams of any size, uniting people, products, and processes across the product development process. The company empowers customers, like Stewart Haas Racing, to push their boundaries and shape a thriving future.

Sharing the No. 41 Mustang with Autodesk is Gene Haas’ newest holding, HaasTooling.com. [Haas Tooling](#) was launched a few weeks ago 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.

What makes the Autodesk Fusion 360 and HaasTooling.com relationship unique is that Autodesk recently [integrated](#) the ability to directly purchase Haas Tooling components from their software. “Autodesk’s Fusion 360 integration of Haas Tooling directly within Fusion’s cloud-based platform, gives engineers, CNC programmers and CNC operators direct access to Haas’ proven cutting tools, data and presets,” said Adam N. Smith, Manager, Strategic Partnerships, at Autodesk. “Haas Tooling’s integration continues to support Fusion 360’s commitment to delivering end-to-end workflows with industry-leading partners.”

Custer heads into Sunday’s Talladega event coming off of a 22nd-place finish last weekend at Homestead-Miami Speedway. He fought a tight-handling No. 41 Jacob Construction/HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang in his first Cup Series race at the 1.5-mile track.

Sunday at Talladega, 5,000 fans will be in the grandstands, along with select guests in the suites high above the famed Alabama track. Even though the stands will not be filled to capacity due to COVID-19 restrictions, the unique racing that Talladega provides is something drivers typically love or hate. The 22-year-old Custer is still honing his craft at the superspeedways. “I think for me, I have to work hard at getting better at superspeedways,” he said. “There’s an art to it, and I have a lot to learn and things that I could do better. At the same time, you do have to have some luck on your side. It’s kind of a 50-50 chance whenever you go to a superspeedway race if you’re going to get caught up in an accident.”

In the Xfinity Series at Talladega, Custer has three starts with a best finish of ninth in April 2018. He has an average starting position of 12.3 and an average finish of 22.3. Even though Custer has always been in strong equipment in the Xfinity Series, he’s often found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time at the superspeedways. “Superspeedway racing for me has been a lot of the ‘wrong-place-at-the-wrong-time’ thing,” he said. “You’ve got to find yourself in a good spot at the end and try and find a way to miss the wrecks. Having a little bit of luck on your side doesn’t hurt, either.”

The California native has one NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series start at Talladega, in October 2016 when he earned the pole position. His day ended prematurely after an accident.

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SHR has 70 starts at Talladega with two pole awards and one victory earned by No. 10 Mustang driver Aric Almirola in October 2018. The victory came after a dominating day by SHR in which all four cars started in the top-four, won both stages, and the four drivers battled each other for the win on the final lap. In total, the Kannapolis-based Ford team has seven top-fives and 21 top-10s at Talladega, along with 380 laps led.

Haas Automation, founded in 1983 by SHR co-owner 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.

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 Autodesk/HaasTooling.com Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

Originally, Talladega was scheduled to have one practice session on Saturday, but that has now been cancelled. Was it a little bit of a letdown that it has been cancelled since it's the first practice you were going to get to have in a while? Or is it not that big of a deal because it's Talladega and there's not a whole lot you can do in practice, anyway?

"I think as a rookie you want as much practice as you can get to just feel things out and see what's working and what's not working. But overall, I think Talladega is one of the tracks you can get away with not having much practice."

The main reason for the practice was the rules package change. Any idea on what to expect now that you will not have any practice? I guess if there is one positive to not having it, it's that none of the guys have had track time with this package there, right?

"I think the biggest thing is that they took the drag ducts out of the car. So seeing what those did and how cars would suck up differently and how they handled differently would've been helpful. It probably changed the aero a tick, so figuring out those little things. Overall, you're going to be working in the draft as much as you can and figuring out what's going to work and what's not. It's figuring that out as fast as you can."

How do you feel about the rookie battle now that we have a decent chunk of races completed? Do you compare yourself to the other rookies much? Or do you focus more on yourself and controlling what you can with your car and team?

"I think for me, I just try and focus on myself. All of our situations are a little bit different. It's just trying to make the best of it and working on yourself to make yourself better. If you do that, you'll find yourself in some better spots."

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