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Custer Finishes 22nd at Talladega *Rookie Ford Driver Has Strong Day Foiled by Fuel*

Date: June 22, 2020
Event: GEICO 500 (Round 13 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway (2.66-mile oval)
Format: 188 laps, broken into three stages (60 laps/60 laps/68 laps)
Note: Race extended three laps past its scheduled 188-lap distance due to a green-white-checked finish.
Start/Finish: 28th/22nd (Running, completed 191 of 191 laps)
Point Standing: 26th with 199 points, 291 out of first

Race Winner: Ryan Blaney of Team Penske (Ford)
Stage 1 Winner: Tyler Reddick of Richard Childress Racing (Chevrolet)
Stage 2 Winner: Ricky Stenhouse Jr., of JTG Daugherty Racing (Chevrolet)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-60):

- Cole Custer started 28th and finished 18th.
- Custer pitted from the fifth during the competition caution for fuel and two right-side tires after reporting he was happy with the Autodesk Fusion 360/HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang's handling. Restarted fifth.
- Just before the conclusion of Stage 1, the race was delayed due to weather for almost an hour.
- The event resumed with the 22-year-old in the 18th position.
- Custer ended the stage in 18th and was happy with his Mustang's handling.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 61-120):

- Custer started in 11th and finished eighth. The No. 41 driver earned three bonus points.
- Early in the stage, Custer raced his Mustang inside the top-five and top-10.
- Under caution on lap 97, Custer pitted from fifth for fuel, two right-side tires. Restarted fourth on lap 99.
- On lap 100, Custer was in the second position with the Autodesk Fusion 360/HaasTooling.com Mustang.
- During the lap-115 caution, Custer reported his Mustang was a "tick free." Crew chief Mike Shiplett made the call for the rookie driver to stay out under caution. Restarted seventh.
- During the stage break the Ford driver pitted for fuel, four tires and to add tape to the grille.

Final Stage Recap (Laps 121-191):

- Custer started 18th, finished 22nd.
- Under caution on lap 134, Custer pitted from 25th for fuel, four tires and adjustments.
- On lap 150, Custer was in the ninth position.
- A late-race caution sent the event into overtime. Custer was set to restart fifth, but as the field came to green, Custer dove onto pit road for fuel after the No. 41 Ford began to stumble from a lack of fuel.
- The unscheduled pit stop resulted in a 22nd-place finish for Custer.

Notes:

- Custer made his 16th career NASCAR Cup Series start and his first at Talladega.
- Ryan Blaney won the GEICO 500 to score his fourth career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his first of the season and his second at Talladega. His margin of victory over second-place Ricky Stenhouse Jr., was .007 of a second.
- This was Ford's series-leading seventh NASCAR Cup Series win of the season and its 693rd all-time Cup Series victory.
- This was Ford's 30th NASCAR Cup Series victory at Talladega. Since October 2014, Ford has won 10 out of the last 12 races held at the track. This is its second straight win at Talladega, as Blaney drove his Ford to victory last October.
- There were eight caution periods for a total of 33 laps.
- Twenty-four of the 40 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.
- Kevin Harvick remains the championship leader after Talladega with a 23-point advantage over second-place Joey Logano.

Cole Custer, driver of the No. 41 Autodesk Fusion 360/HaasTooling.com Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:

“That really stinks to run out of fuel toward the end of the race. My guys are doing a great job and we’ll get it turned around here soon. There’s not much you can do about running out of fuel when it’s a fuel mileage race. We really didn’t need that last caution.”

Next Up:

The next event on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule is a doubleheader June 27-28 at Pocono (Pa.) Raceway. The first race starts at 3:30 p.m. EDT on Saturday, June 27 with live coverage provided by FOX. The second race begins at 4 p.m. EDT on Sunday, June 28 with live coverage provided by FS1. SiriusXM NASCAR Radio will broadcast both races.

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