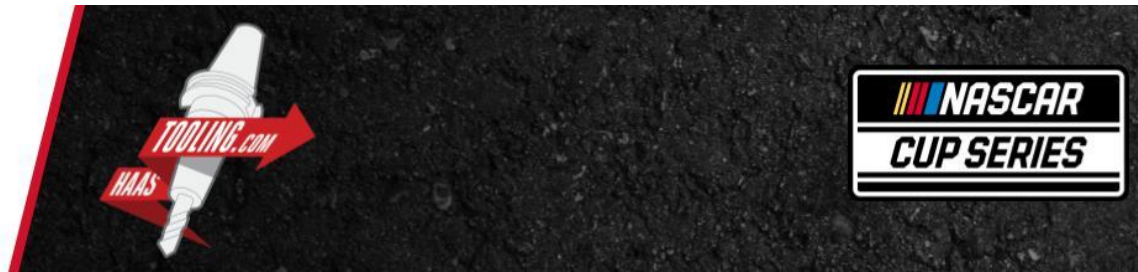


# 41



## Cole Custer Wins First Cup Race

*Rookie Charges From Sixth To First in Final Two Laps*

**Date:** July 12, 2020  
**Event:** Kentucky 400 (Round 17 of 36)  
**Series:** NASCAR Cup Series  
**Location:** Kentucky Speedway in Sparta (1.5-mile oval)  
**Format:** 267 laps, broken into three stages (80 laps/80 laps/107 laps)  
**Start/Finish:** 29<sup>th</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> (Running, completed 267 of 267 laps)  
**Point Standing:** 20<sup>th</sup> with 321 points, 354 out of first

**Race Winner:** Cole Custer of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)  
**Stage 1 Winner:** Aric Almirola of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)  
**Stage 2 Winner:** Brad Keselowski of Team Penske (Ford)

### Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-80):

- Cole Custer started 29<sup>th</sup> and finished 16<sup>th</sup>.
- During the competition caution on lap 25, Custer reported he was pretty happy with the HaasTooling.com Mustang while running 19<sup>th</sup>.
- He pitted for fuel, four tires and a small adjustment and restarted 19<sup>th</sup>.
- During the long green-flag run, the rookie driver continued to work his way forward.
- The California native ended the stage in 16<sup>th</sup> and pitted for fuel, four tires, and adjustments to help loosen up the No. 41 Ford Mustang.

### Stage 2 Recap (Laps 81-160):

- Custer started in 16<sup>th</sup> and finished third to earn eight bonus points
- On lap 100, Custer was in the 14<sup>th</sup> position.
- The HaasTooling.com driver made a scheduled green-flag pit stop for fuel only on lap 149.
- The only caution in Stage 2 was displayed on lap 155.
- Custer stayed out and restarted fourth with only one lap left in the stage.
- Custer finished the stage in third and pitted for fuel, four tires and adjustments.

### Final Stage Recap (Laps 161-267):

- Custer started 22<sup>nd</sup>, finished first.
- By lap 179, Custer was in the 12<sup>th</sup> position.
- On lap 215, the 22-year-old driver moved into the 10<sup>th</sup> spot.
- “Seems like the car is getting pretty good right now,” Custer told the HaasTooling.com crew on lap 218 from the ninth position.
- Custer inherited the lead on lap 224 as the field began to pit under green.
- Custer made a scheduled green-flag pit stop on lap 228. Just after receiving service, the caution was displayed on lap 229.
- He took the wave around and restarted 13<sup>th</sup>.
- The caution was back out on lap 243 and Custer stayed out. The Ford driver restarted 13<sup>th</sup> with 19 laps to go.
- Caution was quickly displayed again and Custer restarted 12<sup>th</sup> on lap 254.
- A great restart catapulted Custer up to sixth when the caution came out on lap 265 and set up a two-lap sprint to the finish.
- Custer restarted from sixth and drove four-wide to make the pass for the lead and win the race.

### Notes:

- Custer earned his first career NASCAR Cup Series victory and it came in his first Cup Series start at Kentucky.
- This was Custer’s second straight top-five. The rookie finished fifth last Sunday in the Brickyard 400 at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.
- Custer led twice for five laps – his first laps led in the NASCAR Cup Series.
- This was only Custer’s 20<sup>th</sup> career NASCAR Cup Series start.
- Custer’s margin of victory over second-place Martin Truex Jr., was .271 of a second.
- Custer’s victory in the Kentucky 400 marked the 81<sup>st</sup> overall win for SHR. It was the organization’s 60<sup>th</sup> points-paying NASCAR Cup Series victory, its fifth of the season and its first at Kentucky.

- This is SHR's second straight victory. Kevin Harvick won the Brickyard 400 last Sunday at Indianapolis Motor Speedway.
- SHR has now won at every track on the current NASCAR Cup Series schedule except the Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway Roval, which has only hosted two races.
- This was SHR's 24<sup>th</sup> NASCAR Cup Series victory with Ford. The team won its first race with Ford when former driver Kurt Busch captured the 2017 Daytona 500.
- This was Ford's series-leading 10<sup>th</sup> NASCAR Cup Series win of the season and its 696<sup>th</sup> all-time Cup Series victory.
- This was Ford's third NASCAR Cup Series victory at Kentucky. Each of its previous wins came with Brad Keselowski in 2014 and 2016.
- There were eight caution periods for a total of 42 laps.
- Twenty-six of the 38 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.
- Harvick remains the championship leader after Kentucky with an 88-point advantage over second-place Keselowski.

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

“We were so good all day. Our car was so good. I mean, obviously, it wasn't the easiest track to pass on, so we were kind of stuck back there, but that was the best car I've ever driven in my life. Everybody at SHR brought an unbelievable car. Mike (Shiplett, crew chief) and Davin (Restivo, lead engineer) on the box, that was unbelievable. Gene (Haas, team co-owner), I can't stress enough how thankful I am for him taking a shot on me. It definitely was not the start to the year that we wanted. We were definitely way off at some places, but this was by far an unbelievable car. We put it all together and I just can't thank everybody enough.”

**Next Up:**

The next event on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule is the non-points NASCAR All-Star Race on Wednesday, July 15 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway. The race starts at 8:30 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by FS1 and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio beginning at 7 p.m. with the undercard NASCAR All-Star Open.

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