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COLE CUSTER

Returning to Daytona for First Road Course of the Season

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Aug. 11, 2020) – Cole Custer and the No. 41 HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang team head south for Sunday’s road-course event at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway. The NASCAR Cup Series will run the speedway’s newly tweaked 14-turn, 3.57-mile layout.

Custer will pilot the No. 41 Ford Mustang adorned with HaasTooling.com for his 26th career Cup Series start. In preparation for this weekend’s event, the Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) driver has spent multiple hours in the Ford simulator. “I’ve probably been in the simulator five or six hours practicing the Daytona road course,” Custer said. “We’ve obviously had to sort through some stuff to get it as realistic as we think we can. From there, it’s trying to get me better and there’s a lot of stuff to work through because we haven’t been there in these Cup cars. We’re trying to make sure we are close on the car, and making sure I’m driving it how I need to. There’s a lot of stuff to be done since we are going to a brand new track layout and we need to make sure we’ve hit everything so we are 100 percent when we show up.”

In last weekend’s doubleheader at Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn, Custer finished 34th in Saturday’s race after an accident ended his day prematurely. On Sunday, Custer ran as high as the top-15 until the handling went away on the No. 41 machine late in the race, and he finished 25th. Teammate Kevin Harvick captured the win both days to earn Ford Performance the prestigious Michigan Heritage Trophy.

This Sunday’s Daytona road course was added to the schedule amended due to COVID-19 restrictions and replaces the originally scheduled Watkins (N.Y.) International event. Sunday is the first time the heavy NASCAR stock cars will race on the road-course layout at Daytona. Making the event more unique is that NASCAR continues to institute a no-practice and no-qualifying policy, meaning no one will have the opportunity to drive on the actual course before the green flag drops on the 234.65-mile event.

Custer doesn’t have any road-course starts in the Cup Series. However, he has 11 road-course starts in the NASCAR Xfinity Series, including three each at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course in Lexington, and Watkins Glen, along with two starts at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway’s “roval.” Custer also has three road-course starts in the Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series at the Canadian Tire Motorsport Park near Toronto.

So far this season, the Mustang has earned 13 wins for Ford. Custer and his SHR teammate Harvick have both earned wins for the Blue Oval this season and have accounted for a total of seven victories.

With Custer’s Cup Series win July 12 at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta, he became one of 10 drivers who have won in each of NASCAR’s top three national series, as well as in ARCA and NASCAR’s developmental K&N Pro Series.

Team co-owner Gene Haas’ newest holding, [Haas Tooling](https://www.haastooling.com), was launched 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. Beginning July 1, HaasTooling.com products became available nationally. The cutting tools available for purchase at HaasTooling.com are even more important during the current COVID-19 pandemic as CNC machines have become vital to producing personal protective equipment.

There are five races left in the regular season before the playoffs start Sept. 6 at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway, and Custer’s win at Kentucky earned him one of the coveted 16 playoff spots. Harvick also owns a playoff spot after six wins this season.

Overall at Daytona, SHR has three wins on the superspeedway oval – two in the July race by team co-owner Tony Stewart and one Daytona 500 win earned by former SHR driver Kurt Busch in 2017.

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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. Custer is the first of the 2020 rookie class to earn a win this season.

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

How do you feel about the choose cone rule now that it has been in action for a couple of races?

“The choose cone rule has been a little bit difficult to figure out what you want to do. It's an important part of the race to choose which lane you want to be in and to take advantage of it, but it can also be over-thought and be really complicated if you want to do it perfectly. It's something we still have to work on some. I think we figured out how to do it during Michigan, it's just a matter of putting it all together.”

Do you think the choose cone rule will be more beneficial at some tracks versus others?

“The choose rule will be more important at places where there is a dominant lane. You're really going to want to take advantage of that and know what the numbers are and how to take advantage of it. When it comes to other tracks where the lanes are more equal, it's not going to be as big of a deal.”

How would you rate yourself as a road racer?

“I've always loved road racing and I feel like I've done a fairly decent job at it. I've been really close to winning several road-course races but have never won on one, so that's always made me pretty mad, honestly. It's always fun to race them and they're very unpredictable. I've come close a number of times and to not have a win is pretty frustrating.”

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