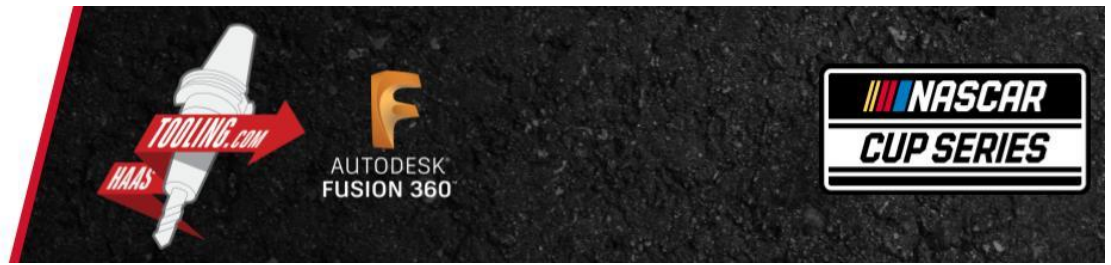


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COLE CUSTER

Looking To Advance to the Round of 12

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Sept. 15, 2020) – This weekend, Cole Custer and the No. 41 HaasTooling.com/Autodesk Fusion 360 team head to Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway for Saturday night’s 500-lap NASCAR Cup Series race. The Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) team heads back to the high-banked concrete oval for the third time in five months. Saturday night marks Custer’s 32nd Cup Series career start.

It’s the final race in the opening Round of 16 of the playoffs, and Custer and the No. 41 team have one final shot to gain enough points to advance to the Round of 12. The rookie driver is currently eight points below the cutoff line. Custer sits 14th in the playoff standings after his 12th-place finish at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway two weekends ago, and a 14th-place finish at Richmond (Va.) Raceway last Saturday.

Custer and his fellow Cup Series competitors have raced at Bristol twice already this season – once in a Sunday 500-lap race on May 30, and for the Wednesday-night Cup Series All-Star Race on July 15. The California native finished 35th in the May event after an accident ended his day just before the halfway point of the race, and he had a 16th-place result in the All-Star Race.

Custer must have a strong performance Saturday night if he is going to advance to the next playoff round. Even though he needs to make up several points, he has a positive attitude going into the weekend. “I don’t feel like we are in a desperate position,” he said. “I feel like we are in a position where we can control a lot of what happens. If we have a good night, run well and can get stage points, we can point our way in. It also depends a little bit on how the guys around us run, obviously. However, I feel like if we have a good night at Bristol, then we can get ourselves into the next round. I think we’re still in a very manageable spot.”

In the NASCAR Xfinity Series at Bristol, Custer has six starts at the half-mile track. The Ford driver started on the pole twice and in the top-10 the other four times, giving him an average starting position of 3.8. Custer has a best Xfinity Series finish of third with an average finishing position of 13.2 at the Tennessee track.

HaasTooling.com will share the livery on Custer’s No. 41 Saturday with Autodesk Fusion 360. 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 SHR, to push their boundaries and shape a thriving future.

So far this season, Ford has won 16 races, and Custer and his SHR teammate Kevin Harvick have both earned wins for the Blue Oval. This season they have combined for a total of nine victories. Harvick captured Ford’s milestone 700th win in the Cup Series Aug. 23 at Dover (Del.) International Speedway. Ford captured its first victory on June 25, 1950. Ford drivers make up 50 percent of this year’s playoff field, with eight drivers representing the Michigan manufacturer.

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 one of NASCAR’s developmental series.

Team co-owner Gene Haas’ newest holding, [Haas Tooling](#), 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.

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SHR has two wins at Bristol with Harvick capturing the win in August 2016 and former SHR driver Kurt Busch winning in August 2018. In total, SHR has two pole awards, 11 top-fives and 30 top-10s along with 873 laps led at Bristol

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.

Custer, who had a trio of starts in the Cup Series in 2018, clinched 2020 Rookie of the Year honors in his official rookie season in NASCAR's most prestigious series. Competing against fellow rookie notables Christopher Bell and Tyler Reddick, he was the only rookie to clinch a playoff spot this season.

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

How does this experience in the playoffs compare to your previous experience in the Xfinity Series playoffs?

"It's definitely intense. I think in some ways it's a little less intense than usual because you don't have practice, qualifying, and all of those moments throughout the weekend. Now, you just have to race, and it is what it is with how the car is going to unload and how it's going to be on the first lap. There's only so much you can stress about. You have to do your homework and make sure you're prepared, but there are not as many places for you to mess it up during the weekend. The hard part is still the unknown, though, with not knowing what you're going to have."

How has running twice at Bristol already this season going to be helpful for this weekend?

"It's definitely nice to go back to a track that we've raced at twice already. We've had a chance to try a couple of different things with the cars there, but we'd definitely like a practice for us rookies so we could try some things. At the same time, we should hopefully have a little bit of a notebook to work with at Bristol. It will be interesting because without practice you have to hit it perfect right off of the truck. If you don't hit it right, which is very hard to do, you spend a lot of your day scratching and clawing your way."

If you don't make it out of the first round of playoffs, will you still consider it a successful season? Or will you be more disappointed that you're not going on to the next round?

"I know I'm not going to be happy if I don't make it out of the first round. If you get knocked out of the playoffs at any point, you're not going to be happy. If it happens, I know we can hold our heads high on our accomplishments this year. We've definitely grown as a team this year and, when we hit it right, we can go and compete with these guys."

"How nervous are you headed into this Bristol race knowing so much is on the line?"

"I'm sure when we get to Bristol and I'm about to take the green, I'll be pretty nervous because it's a pretty hectic race and a lot can happen. At the same time, I think I've learned being nervous and stressed is not going to help me. You have to make sure you have a plan and study as much as you can coming into the race. The hard part is just the unknown. You don't know what you're going to have the first lap and hope that you hit it right."

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