

# 41



## COLE CUSTER

### Moving On from the Championship Hunt

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Sept. 22, 2020) – For the final NASCAR Cup Series race of September, Cole Custer and the No. 41 HaasTooling.com team for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) venture out to Las Vegas Motor Speedway for Sunday’s South Point 400. The season’s second stop at the mile-and-a-half desert oval will be Custer’s 33<sup>rd</sup> Cup Series start.

Las Vegas marks the first race of the Round of 12 in this year’s Cup Series playoffs. Custer qualified for the playoffs in this, his rookie season. He finished 12<sup>th</sup> at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway and 14<sup>th</sup> at Richmond (Va.) Raceway in the opening two races of the Round of 16, but missed advancing to the next round by 28 points after finishing 23<sup>rd</sup> at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway last Saturday night after battling an ill-handling Mustang. Nonetheless, the season isn’t a wash for Southern California native. He can finish as high as fifth in the championship points. “I studied as much as I could going into Bristol to figure things out, but I just missed it somewhere,” Custer said. “We’ll keep trying, though, even though we aren’t moving on to the next round.”

In February at Las Vegas, Custer started 17<sup>th</sup> and finished 19<sup>th</sup> after fighting a tight-handling car throughout the day. He also made a Cup Series start in 2018 at Las Vegas in a Rick Ware Racing-owned entry, starting 30<sup>th</sup> and finishing 27<sup>th</sup> in his first ever Cup Series outing.

In addition to the HaasTooling.com paint scheme on the No. 41 Ford Mustang, Custer will have two special people riding along with him this weekend. In support of the Martin Truex Jr. Foundation and the NASCAR Foundation’s Cancer Heroes program, Custer will have the names of Kieran Ecker above the driver’s side door and Margaret Evelyn Crosby above the passenger door. Ecker who was nominated by his wife Bethany, was diagnosed with diffuse large b-cell lymphoma last year. Ecker continued to work at Ford Motor Company while undergoing treatment. Evelyn Crosby was nominated by Joe Custer, Cole’s father. Crosby is the rookie driver’s great grandmother and was diagnosed with leukemia and succumbed to the disease in 1937.

In the Xfinity Series, Custer has five starts at Las Vegas from 2017 to 2019 with three pole awards and four top-10 finishes. In total, Custer has an average Xfinity Series starting position of 5.4 and an average finishing position of 7.2, along with 54 laps led. Custer has one 2016 outing in the Gander RV & Outdoor Truck Series at Las Vegas. He started and finished third.

So far this season, Ford has won 17 races, and Custer and his SHR teammate Kevin Harvick have both earned wins for the Blue Oval – one for Custer and nine for Harvick. Ford’s milestone 700<sup>th</sup> win in the Cup Series came at the hands of Harvick on Aug. 23 at Dover (Del.) International Speedway. Ford captured its first victory on June 25, 1950. Ford drivers made up 50 percent of this year’s starting playoff field, with eight drivers representing the Michigan manufacturer in the Round of 16, and five drivers continuing on to the Round of 12.

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](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.

In 47 starts at Las Vegas, SHR has three wins with team co-owner Tony Stewart capturing the first in March 2012, and Harvick adding wins in March 2015 and March 2018. In total, SHR has three pole awards, eight top-fives and 16 top-10s along with 994 laps led at Las Vegas.

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 Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing:***

**What has been the hardest thing for you to adapt to this season as a rookie?**

“The 550 package on the mile-and-a-halfes that we run. It's been strange getting used to that. It's so different from what we ran in the Xfinity Series. You can look at as much data and video as you want, but you really don't get to feel it until you're out there. It was really confusing to me at the beginning of the year, honestly. Now I feel like we know what I want in the cars and what I want on the track. Now it's just trying to be consistent with it.”

**What does it actually mean from the driver's perspective when you talk about the difference between the 550 and 750 package?**

“Well, the aero is different, so how the car works traffic is a lot different. The gas is a lot different because you're carrying so much more throttle time. How you work the brake, how you work the restarts, everything about it is just different. So if you're not hitting it 100 percent as good as you can in all of those areas, you're going to get eaten up. You're trying to perfect it and know exactly what you need to do in each situation.”

**What's the best piece of advice you've been given on how to get to that next level in your career?**

“I think the best piece is just taking it one step at a time. Find ways to make yourself better and still stay hungry. You're going to stress yourself out too much if you don't take it one step at a time.”

**You've raced against Kyle Busch a lot in the Xfinity Series. He's having a tough year in the Cup Series without a win, yet, but he is the defending series champion. Regardless, how hard and tough is it to beat Kyle on the track?**

“Kyle is one of the best out there and can do impressive things in the car. It's a huge deal to get to race with him. You can learn a lot from him and his year goes to show that you have to have all of the pieces of the puzzle come together to win a race. It's not easy, and some of the best out there go through some dry spells.”

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