

41



Custer Finishes 14th at Richmond **Rookie Driver Completes Second Cup Start at Virginia Track**

Date: Sept. 12, 2020
Event: Federated Auto Parts 400 (Round 28 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Richmond (Va.) Raceway (0.75-mile oval)
Format: 400 laps, broken into three stages (80 laps/155 laps/165 laps)
Start/Finish: 13th/14th (Running, completed 399 of 400 laps)
Point Standing: 14th with 2,053 points, 8 points below top-12 cutoff

Race Winner: Brad Keselowski of Team Penske (Ford)
Stage 1 Winner: Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)
Stage 2 Winner: Brad Keselowski of Team Penske (Ford)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-80):

- Cole Custer started 13th and finished 11th.
- On lap 15 Custer was in the ninth position.
- Custer pitted during the lap-30 competition caution from ninth after reporting his Mustang was tight. He restarted ninth.
- The rookie driver finished the stage in 11th as his car's handling continued to tighten.
- During the stage break, Custer pitted for fuel, four tires and adjustments.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 81-235):

- Custer started ninth and finished 16th.
- Custer jumped to sixth early in the stage with a great restart.
- On lap 112, Custer dropped to eighth after reporting his HaasTooling.com Mustang would not turn.
- The California native made a scheduled green-flag pit stop on lap 153 and cycled to the fourth spot on lap 166.
- Custer ran eighth on lap 191 after reporting he couldn't roll the center in his Ford Mustang.
- On lap 211 the young driver was 13th.
- Custer slipped back to 16th and fell one lap down just before the conclusion of the stage. He received the free pass and pitted for service during the stage break.

Final Stage Recap (Laps 236-400):

- Custer started 16th, finished 14th.
- Custer remained in 16th when he made a scheduled green-flag pit stop on lap 294 for service and adjustments to help his tight condition.
- The Ford driver was up to 13th on lap 317.
- On lap 342 Custer pitted from 13th while one lap down for fuel, four tires and adjustments to help with his turn.
- Custer slipped back to 15th after his pit stop before working his way up to 14th where he ultimately finished.

Notes:

- Custer earned his 10th top-15 of the season and his first top-15 in two career NASCAR Cup Series start at Richmond.
- In his previous NASCAR Cup Series start at Richmond, Custer started 10th and finished 26th.
- This was Custer's second straight top-15. He finished 12th in the series' last race at Darlington.
- Brad Keselowski won the Federated Auto Parts 400 to score his 34th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his fourth of the season and his second at Richmond. His margin of victory over second-place Martin Truex Jr., was 1.568 seconds.
- This was Ford's series-leading 16th NASCAR Cup Series win of the season and its 702nd all-time Cup Series victory.
- This was Ford's 33rd NASCAR Cup Series victory at Richmond. Ford's previous win at the track came with Joey Logano in April 2017. Its first Richmond win came on May 5, 1957 with Paul Goldsmith.
- There were three caution periods for a total of 21 laps.
- Only 11 of the 38 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.
- Kevin Harvick remains the championship leader after Richmond with a 21-point advantage over second-place Denny Hamlin.

-more-

Playoff Standings (with one race to go before Round of 12):

1. Kevin Harvick (2,143 points) 1 win
2. Brad Keselowski (2,112 points) 1 win
3. Denny Hamlin (2,122 points) +64 points
4. Joey Logano (2,109 points) +51 points
5. Martin Truex Jr. (2,096 points) +38 points
6. Austin Dillon (2,094 points) +36 points
7. Chase Elliott (2,086 points) +28 points
8. Alex Bowman (2,085 points) +27 points
9. Kyle Busch (2,076 points) +18 points
10. Aric Almirola (2,065 points) +7 points
11. Kurt Busch (2,065 points) +7 points
12. Clint Bowyer (2,061 points) +3 points
13. William Byron (2,058 points) -3 points
- 14. Cole Custer (2,053 points) -8 points**
15. Matt DiBenedetto (2,036 points) -25 points
16. Ryan Blaney (2,034 points) -27 points

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

“Classic Richmond I guess, but we fought all night trying to find the perfect balance and it’s just really hard to find at Richmond. This track is like you’re racing on ice. We had times when we were pretty good in our HaasTooling.com Mustang and there were times when we were a little off, and it led to an okay day. I think we’re only eight points out so that’s not too bad. We can go to Bristol and lock ourselves in but it’s going to be a fight until the end.”

Next Up:

The next event on the NASCAR Cup Series schedule is the Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race on Saturday, Sept. 19 at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway. It is the third race of the 10-race playoffs and the last race in the Round of 16. It starts at 7:30 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by NBCSN and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

-TSC-