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COLE CUSTER

Heading to the Midwest

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Oct. 13, 2020) – This weekend, Cole Custer and his No. 41 HaasTooling.com team for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) venture to the Midwest for Sunday’s 400-mile race at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City. The intermediate oval event marks Custer’s 36th career Cup Series start and his second at Kansas.

At last Sunday’s Roval 400 at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway, Custer started 28th, survived contact from a competitor that sent him spinning on the racing surface, and was able to recover by rallying to a ninth-place finish in his first Cup Series start on the “roval.”

The California native’s only previous Cup Series outing at Kansas was in July, when he started 24th and finished seventh. Custer started the final stage 22nd and was able to work his way forward to a top-10 despite a tight-handling Mustang.

Custer has four starts in the NASCAR Xfinity Series at Kansas with a best finish of 11th in October of last year. In total, the Ford driver has an average Xfinity Series starting position of 10.2 and an averaging finishing position of 22.8, along with 85 laps led. He has one NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series start at Kansas when he started and finished inside the top-10.

In his last nine starts at intermediate tracks, Custer has one win – Kentucky Speedway in Sparta – and one other top-10 to bring his average finishing position to 17.0 on the intermediate ovals.

Even though Custer is out of contention for this year’s Cup Series championship, he still has four more opportunities to capture his second win of the season. This weekend, a limited number of fans will be allowed to attend the 267-lap event while following socially distancing guidelines.

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 700th 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. SHR No. 4 driver Harvick, continues on to the playoffs Round of 8 which begin this weekend at Kansas.

With Custer’s Cup Series win July 12 at Kentucky, 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.

SHR has 70 starts at Kansas with three wins – team co-owner Tony Stewart in October 2009, and Harvick with wins in October 2016 and May 2018. SHR also has four pole awards, 13 top-fives and 27 top-10s at the Kansas track. In total, SHR has an average starting position of 14.7 and an average finishing position of 15.3 along with 837 laps led.

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. Custer was the highest finishing rookie last weekend at the Charlotte roval.

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

How do you approach Kansas?

“Kansas is a tough racetrack. You have to move around and work the different lanes. You have to have the speed, as well, obviously. Track position is going to be huge and how you work the strategy is important. It's a track where you have to put everything together.”

Do you think the intensity will be different at Kansas this time since it's in the playoffs?

“I think the Kansas playoff race is kind of treated the same as any other playoff race. You have to make sure you can work the lanes good, and work them from the bottom to the top of the track. It's one of those tracks in the playoffs where you'll see the intensity go up and more aggressiveness on restarts and things like that. You have to race as hard as you would anywhere else on any given week.”

What has been the highlight of your season so far?

“It has definitely been the win at Kentucky. That pretty much changed my whole season and was pretty unimaginable. It's my rookie season and there have been so many peaks and valleys, it seems like. I've had some good races to look back on and be proud of. There are some really bad ones that I'm not proud of. It's just trying to level those out more to be more consistent and be in the top-10.”

What do you think about Clint Bowyer leaving SHR and going to the FOX booth?

“I think anyone who works in NASCAR or is a NASCAR fan, they want to have the experience of what it's like to be up close and personal with Clint. He's such a personality and people want to know if what they see is what he's really like in person. To have that experience with him this year is awesome. He's so outgoing, so energetic and it was also cool to see what he had to say about the cars, the advice he gives and things like that. It was cool to get that experience with him in his last year. Going into the booth, I think that's a match made in heaven. He's going to knock it out of the park. I think he'll be as good as anybody in the booth.”

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