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COLE CUSTER

Making Second Martinsville Cup Series Start

KANNAPOLIS, North Carolina (Oct. 29, 2020) – Cole Custer will make his 38th career NASCAR Cup Series start in his No. 41 HaasTooling.com Ford Mustang for Stewart-Haas Racing (SHR) during Sunday's Xfinity 500 on the .526-mile oval at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway.

Custer started 16th in the No. 41 Autodesk Fusion 360/HaasTooling.com Mustang last Sunday at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth. After 52 laps around the 1.5-mile oval, the 500-mile event was halted due to rain. After futile attempts to dry the track on Monday, the race was once again postponed and eventually concluded on Wednesday. Custer's No. 41 crew worked on the handling of his Mustang and he ultimately finished 14th. The result was the best in the race among the four-car SHR entry.

Custer made his first Martinsville start in the Cup Series in June. The California native started 27th and fought a tight-handling Mustang throughout the race and finished 29th.

In the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series at Martinsville, Custer has six starts and, with the exception of the March 2016 race, the rookie driver started in the top-10 each time, including a pole award in October 2015. The Ford driver has a best Truck Series finish of fourth and an average starting position of 5.2 and an average finishing position of 16.2, along with 115 laps led at the Southern Virginia paperclip-shaped track.

In his last seven starts at tracks 1 mile or less, Custer has two top-10s – Phoenix Raceway and Dover (Del.) International Speedway – with an average starting position of 17.2 and an average finishing position of 18.7.

Even though Custer is out of contention for this year's Cup Series championship, he still has two more opportunities to capture his second win of the season. This weekend, a limited number of fans will be allowed to attend the 500-lap event while following social distancing guidelines.

So far this season, Ford has won 18 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. Ford captured its first victory on June 25, 1950. Ford drivers made up 50 percent of this year's starting playoff field. SHR's Harvick advanced to the playoffs' Round of 8, of which Martinsville is the third of three races.

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 74 starts at Martinsville with four wins – team co-owner Tony Stewart in October 2011, Ryan Newman in April 2012, Kurt Busch in March 2014 and Clint Bowyer in March 2018. SHR has one pole award with 10 top-fives and 29 top-10s at Martinsville, with an average starting position of 13.7 and an average finishing position of 17.2 along with 739 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.

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

Martinsville has moved from being the first race in this round to the cutoff race. What do you think Martinsville is going to be like, now?

“There's going to be a lot of intensity at Martinsville. There's probably going to be a lot of contact. The drivers who are in bad points positions are going to do what they have to do to get their spot in the playoffs at Phoenix. There will be desperate people making some desperate moves.”

Martinsville is such a tough place and there's much more to it than the eye can see, so how do you survive?

“I have a few starts there in the Truck Series, and one earlier this year in the Cup Series. The flat, short tracks are some of the hardest to get around in the Cup car. A lot of Martinsville is just about trying to be there at the end. I think if you're closer to the front, you're going to have a better chance of staying out of trouble. It's a tough race and you've got to kind of root and gouge your way around there. I think being very patient is one of the biggest things.”

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