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Custer Earns 13th-Place Finish at Martinsville **Rookie Driver Secures Best Cup Series Result at Virginia Track**

Date: Nov. 1, 2020
Event: Xfinity 500 (Round 35 of 36)
Series: NASCAR Cup Series
Location: Martinsville (Va.) Speedway (.526-mile oval)
Format: 500 laps, broken into three stages (130 laps/130 laps/240 laps)
Start/Finish: 15th/13th (Running, completed 500 of 500 laps)
Point Standing: 16th with 2,193 points

Race Winner: Chase Elliott of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)
Stage 1 Winner: Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)
Stage 2 Winner: Chase Elliott of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)

Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-130):

- Cole Custer started 15th and finished 24th.
- On lap 26, Custer reported his Mustang needed help on the long run while running 16th.
- During the lap-60 competition caution, Custer pitted from 18th for service and restarted 12th in the HaasTooling.com Mustang.
- Throughout the lap-73 and lap-103 cautions, Custer stayed on the racing surface and restarted from fourth on lap 110.
- The caution was displayed again on lap 114 with Custer in the 10th spot after fresher tires prevailed on competitors cars. He pitted and restarted 23rd with 10 laps remaining in the stage.
- Custer didn't pit during the stage break in order to keep track position and manage tires.

Stage 2 Recap (Laps 131-260):

- Custer started third and finished 14th.
- From fifth under caution on lap 146, Custer reported his Mustang was loose in and tight center. He didn't pit and was in the eighth position on lap 170.
- On lap 185, under caution, Custer relayed his Mustang was okay. He pitted from 11th and restarted eighth.
- Custer remained in the top-10 when the caution was displayed on lap 215 and he pitted for service. After varying pit strategies, Custer restarted 21st.
- On lap 240, the California native was in the 13th spot and finished the stage in 14th.

Final Stage Recap (Laps 261-500):

- Custer started 12th, finished 13th.
- Custer remained in the top-15 during the green-flag run until the caution was displayed on lap 351. Custer reported his Mustang was tight in the center.
- Under caution on lap 400 Custer reported his center remained tight while in the 16th spot. He restarted 15th.
- Another caution was displayed on lap 441 and Custer pitted from 15th for four tires and to add tape to the grille. He restarted 15th.
- In the closing laps, Custer worked his way up to the 13th position and took the checkered flag.

Notes:

- Custer was the highest finishing NASCAR Cup Series rookie.
- Custer earned his 14th top-15 of the season and his first top-15 in his second career NASCAR Cup Series start at Martinsville.
- This was Custer's fourth straight top-15. He finished ninth on Oct. 11 at the Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway Roval, 14th on Oct. 18 at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City and 14th in the series' previous race at Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth.
- Chase Elliott won the Xfinity 500 to score his 10th career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his fourth of the season and his first at Martinsville. His margin of victory over second-place Ryan Blaney was 6.577 seconds.
- There were 12 caution periods for a total of 83 laps.
- Only 17 of the 39 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.

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

“We were night and day better from the last time we were here at Martinsville. It was definitely a huge improvement and gives us something to build on for the next time we come back here. The guys kept adjusting on the HaasTooling.com Mustang all day.”

Next Up:

The NASCAR Cup Series season finale is Sunday, Nov. 8 at Phoenix Raceway. The championship race starts at 3 p.m. EST with live coverage provided by NBC and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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