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## **Custer Closes Out Rookie Season at Phoenix** ***Loose Wheel Foils Strong Run for Cup Series Rookie of the Year***

**Date:** Nov. 8, 2020  
**Event:** Season Finale 500 (Round 36 of 36)  
**Series:** NASCAR Cup Series  
**Location:** Phoenix Raceway (1-mile oval)  
**Format:** 312 laps, broken into three stages (75 laps/115 laps/122 laps)  
**Start/Finish:** 15<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> (Running, completed 310 of 312 laps)  
**Point Standing:** 16<sup>th</sup> with 2,202 points

**Champion:** Chase Elliott of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)  
**Race Winner:** Chase Elliott of Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet)  
**Stage 1 Winner:** Joey Logano of Team Penske (Ford)  
**Stage 2 Winner:** Brad Keselowski of Team Penske (Ford)

### **Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-75):**

- Cole Custer started 15<sup>th</sup> and finished 14<sup>th</sup>.
- On lap 13, Custer reported his Mustang was a little too free while running 13<sup>th</sup>.
- During the lap-30 competition caution, Custer pitted from 12<sup>th</sup> for service and restarted 12<sup>th</sup> in the HaasTooling.com Mustang.
- On lap 53, the rookie driver reported his Mustang was loose on landing while in the 15<sup>th</sup> spot.
- Custer pitted from 14<sup>th</sup> during the stage break for fuel, four tires and adjustments.

### **Stage 2 Recap (Laps 76-190):**

- Custer started 14<sup>th</sup> and finished 13<sup>th</sup>.
- On lap 100, Custer was in the 18<sup>th</sup> spot and worked his way back up to 15<sup>th</sup> by lap 125.
- On lap 130, the Ford driver relayed to the crew that his Mustang was not handling well while continuing to run 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Custer made a scheduled green-flag pit stop on lap 137 from the 15<sup>th</sup> spot.
- Under caution on lap 161 Custer pitted from 17<sup>th</sup> for adjustments to help with his exit. He restarted 15<sup>th</sup>.
- In the closing laps of Stage 2, Custer gained two spots to end it in 13<sup>th</sup> before pitting for service.

### **Final Stage Recap (Laps 191-312):**

- Custer started 20<sup>th</sup>, finished 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Custer made an unscheduled pit stop on lap 206 for a loose wheel and returned to the track one lap down.
- The young driver made his final stop on lap 271 for fuel, four tires and adjustments.
- On lap 290, Custer was in the 28<sup>th</sup> spot and ultimately finished in the same position.

### **Notes:**

- When the checkered flag dropped on the Season Finale 500, Custer was officially named the 2020 NASCAR Cup Series Rookie of the Year. The 22-year-old racer from Ladera Ranch, California, sealed this accolade when he made a last-lap pass for the win July 12 at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta. Custer was the only rookie to qualify for the NASCAR Playoffs and the first rookie to win a NASCAR Cup Series race since Chris Buescher in 2016.
- This was Custer's 39<sup>th</sup> career NASCAR Cup Series start and his second at Phoenix.
- Chase Elliott won the Season Finale 500 to score his 11<sup>th</sup> career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his fifth of the season and his first at Phoenix. His margin of victory over second-place Brad Keselowski was 2.740 seconds.
- Elliott earned the NASCAR Cup Series championship at Phoenix by virtue of his win. He is the 34<sup>th</sup> different driver to win the series title.
- There were four caution periods for a total of 27 laps.
- Only 12 of the 39 drivers in the race finished on the lead lap.
- Ford clinched its 17<sup>th</sup> manufacturers' championship with a series-leading 18 victories in 2020, 10 of which were scored by SHR. This is the second time in the last three seasons Ford has won the manufacturers' title. Its 18 wins rank as its third-highest total in the modern era (1972-present). Ford won 19 races in 2018 and 1997, one less than its modern-era record of 20 in 1994.

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

“Not the finish we wanted at Phoenix today, but I have to thank the crew and everyone at Stewart-Haas Racing, HaasTooling.com and Ford Performance for standing behind me this year. They worked with me and helped me get better this season. I think we have a lot to look forward to next year and we have a lot to build on. It was definitely a rookie season with a lot of peaks and valleys. It was a really interesting season to be a rookie with no practice, no testing or qualifying, so it was a lot of just learning on the fly, but I think we all managed it very well. We had a really good rookie class of me, Tyler (Reddick), Christopher (Bell) and John Hunter (Nemechek). I think we all had really good runs throughout the year and it definitely means a lot to win the Cup Series Rookie of the Year.”

**Next Up:**

The 2021 season kicks off with the 63<sup>rd</sup> running of the Daytona 500 on Sunday, Feb. 14 with live coverage from FOX and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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