

# 96

**GBR**  
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



## Suárez Scores 27<sup>th</sup>–Place Finish at Darlington *Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry Driver Just Misses Third Straight Top-25*

**Date:** May 20, 2020  
**Event:** Toyota 500k  
**Series:** NASCAR Cup Series  
**Location:** Darlington (S.C.) Raceway (1.366-mile oval)  
**Format:** 228 laps, broken into three stages (60 laps/65 laps/103 laps)  
**Start/Finish:** 25<sup>th</sup> / 27<sup>th</sup> (Running, completed 207 of 208 laps)  
**Point Standing:** 30<sup>th</sup> with 54 points, 204 out of first  
**Note:** Race called official 20 laps short of its scheduled 228-lap distance due to rain.

**Race Winner:** Denny Hamlin of Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota)

**Stage 1 Winner:** Clint Bowyer of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)

**Stage 2 Winner:** Clint Bowyer of Stewart-Haas Racing (Ford)

### Stage 1 Recap (Laps 1-60):

- Started 25<sup>th</sup>, finished 30<sup>th</sup>.
- The opening lap saw Suárez drop a position as the green flag flew, then restart 23<sup>rd</sup> on lap seven after the day's first caution period, then fall back to 27<sup>th</sup> when the caution flag flew again on lap 10. He said the Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry lacked overall grip even though it was turning well in the opening laps.
- Suárez restarted 34<sup>th</sup> after right-side wedge and air pressure adjustments enabled him to pick up five spots by the time a scheduled competition caution period arrived on lap 25. He restarted 30<sup>th</sup> after the competition caution and held that position to the end of the segment while reporting the car was "a little better balanced."
- A solid four-tire pit stop, during which the No. 96 Toyota crew made just air pressure adjustments, enabled Suárez to pick up six spots and restart 24<sup>th</sup> to begin the second segment.

### Stage 2 Recap (Laps 60-125):

- Started 24<sup>th</sup>, finished 27.
- The segment restarted on lap 68 and the caution flag flew just six laps later. The team decided to gamble by keeping Suárez on track, and he restarted 12<sup>th</sup> on lap 76. But with most of the rest of the field having pitted for fresher tires, he dropped 16 positions over the next six laps before the caution flag flew once again.
- Suárez pitted for tires this time and restarted 25<sup>th</sup>. He dropped two positions over the next 21 laps before the next caution, reporting the Today. Tomorrow. Toyota struggled on short runs but seemed to improve on longer runs. He also said he was surprised the track grew more free as the race progressed to that point, rather than get tighter as is typical during nighttime racing at Darlington.
- He restarted 27<sup>th</sup> on lap 113 and held that position to the end of the stage. The team made a multitude of adjustments during the break – air pressure, wedge, track bar – in an effort to tighten up the car.

### Stage 3 Recap (Laps 126-228):

- Started 27<sup>th</sup>, finished 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Suárez held his relative position throughout the final stage, which started with the longest green-flag run of the night – 46 laps.
- He was called to the pits under green on lap 175 while working his way up to 17<sup>th</sup> as one of the last cars to cycle through green-flag stops. One lap later, the caution flag flew, and he restarted on lap 185 in 28<sup>th</sup>, one lap down.
- The yellow flag flew again on lap 195, and Suárez pitted from 28<sup>th</sup> for fresh tires and adjustments to counter those that were made during the prior segment break in an effort to free up the car.
- Suárez gained a position to 27<sup>th</sup> before rain began to fall and the red flag flew on lap 208. Officials called the race shortly thereafter, 20 laps short of its scheduled 228-lap distance.

### Daniel Suárez, driver of the No. 96 Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:

"We are building, so from that standpoint, I think Dave (Winston, crew chief) and the team did a good job. Compared to Sunday, I think we brought a lot more speed with our Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry this time. Unfortunately, we weren't able to capitalize. I was surprised from the early to the middle part of the race how the car was getting more and more free. Darlington is a track that always gets tighter and tighter as the race goes. I thought the loose car actually seemed to be working for us on the longer runs. Then we made some big changes in the middle part of the race and the car got too tight. We were kind of stuck with that because of the long run. Other than that, I feel like we're heading in the right direction. The car had more raw speed tonight even though the balance wasn't as good as we would like it to be. We just need to keep building."

**Race Notes:**

- This was the first NASCAR Cup Series race to be held on a Wednesday in 36 years. The last time: July 4, 1984 when Richard Petty scored his 200<sup>th</sup> career victory at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway.
- Denny Hamlin won the Toyota 500k to score his 39<sup>th</sup> career NASCAR Cup Series victory, his second of the season and his third at Darlington.
- There were 11 caution periods for a total of 54 laps.
- Only 23 of the 39 drivers in the Toyota 500k finished on the lead lap.
- Kevin Harvick remains the championship leader after Darlington with a 34-point advantage over second-place Joey Logano.

**Next Up:**

The next NASCAR Cup Series event for Suárez and the Gaunt Brothers Racing team is the Coca-Cola 600 on Sunday, May 24 at Charlotte (N.C.) Motor Speedway. The race starts at 6 p.m. EDT with live coverage provided by FOX and SiriusXM NASCAR Radio.

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