

# 96

**GBR**  
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



## DANIEL SUÁREZ

### Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Driver Ready for a Second Dose of Darlington

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (May 18, 2020) – After having to wait 70 days between their back-to-back top-25 finishes March 8 at Phoenix Raceway and Sunday at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway, Daniel Suárez and his No. 96 Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) have just three days to wait until their next scheduled stop on the NASCAR Cup Series tour – Wednesday night’s Toyota 500k that takes them back to Darlington’s 1.366-mile egg-shaped oval.

The fourth-year Cup Series driver from Monterrey, Mexico, and his single-car GBR team that’s tackling the full Cup Series schedule for the first time in its 10-year history returned from the 10-week shutdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and posted a 25<sup>th</sup>-place finish in Sunday’s The Real Heroes 400. They started 37<sup>th</sup> on a grid determined by blind draw, overcame a midrace tire puncture and subsequent spin approaching turn two, and picked up where they left off 10 weeks prior at Phoenix, where they finished 21<sup>st</sup>.

With no practice or qualifying, Suárez and his crew chief Dave Winston took a conservative approach into their first race back, looking to ease into competitive mode on one of the trickiest and meanest racetracks on the NASCAR calendar. The goal Sunday was to post a solid result, emerge unscathed in the Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry, and bring it back in attack mode for Wednesday’s 310-mile race under the lights.

From that conservative standpoint, it was mission accomplished. Deep down inside, however, the fiercely competitive Suárez and Winston are hungry for much better results and feel they are capable of achieving them, even though Sunday’s race was just their fourth race together.

Suárez will start 25<sup>th</sup> on a Toyota 500 starting grid determined by Sunday’s finishing order – the top-20 ahead of him inverted, with race-winner Kevin Harvick starting 20<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-place finisher Ryan Preece starting on the pole.

Continuing the Real Heroes initiative in recognition of the nation’s frontline health care workers who have been battling the COVID-19 pandemic since its onset, the No. 96 Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry will honor Johnanna Brooke Munroe, a registered nurse in the Medical ICU at Duke University Hospital, which is a designated COVID-19 unit. Munroe hails from Southport, North Carolina, and attended East Carolina University before passing her nursing board exams. She also is a longtime friend of team owner Marty Gaunt and his family. Munroe’s name will appear above the driver-side door of the No. 96 Camry during the Toyota 500 and, like Sunday, a huge thank you to all medical frontline workers will appear on the hood of the racecar.

Arriving with an improved racecar after lessons learned Sunday and avoiding trouble in the race will be the goal as usual for Suárez and his GBR teammates, all with an eye toward bettering that season’s best run at Phoenix.

**DANIEL SUÁREZ, Driver of the No. 96 Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:**

**How do you feel about your and the team’s return to live racing Sunday at Darlington and your 25<sup>th</sup>-place finish?**

“I think it was a decent day, a clean day. Not totally clean, actually, because I almost hit the wall when we had a flat tire – a flat right-rear that put us behind a little bit. But we were able to overcome that. Like I said Sunday night, we are overachieving at this point, which is good, but obviously we have to keep working to try to get more speed. We’re still building many different areas of the team and I have a lot of confidence that we’re going to start heading in the right direction. We just have to really keep digging and hopefully take everything we learned on the track on Sunday, and everything we can learn in our meetings at the shop, and come back stronger on Wednesday.”

**Wednesday’s race scheduled to be a night race. How much of what you learned during Sunday’s afternoon race apply?**

“Nighttime at Darlington is definitely different than daytime. The track is tighter and you have to keep adjusting on that. At the end of the day, you just have to work on your adjustments at the shop and, whoever has the best notebook and best simulation and data, that’s the team that has the best chance on Wednesday night.”

**There’s been talk of midweek races for years, and now they’re finally here. What do you think about that?**

“That’s a good question and I don’t really know. We’ll find out starting Wednesday night. We’re all going to learn. For me, I think it’s fun to race during the week. I think every single team is going to struggle at least a little bit because nobody was planning on doing this when the season started, and then we were shut down for so long. We’re definitely working hard to make it work to our advantage as a team. As a driver, if I could race every day, I would be very happy, but from a team standpoint, it’s going to be very good experience and a very good learning curve for everyone.”

**With less time to recover from the last race and prepare for the next race, what effect do midweek races have from a driver fitness standpoint?**

“Normally we race once every six or seven days, and now we will have weeks where we will have races every three or four days. From a time standpoint, that means twice as many competition meetings, data sessions, reports to write, all the things we normally do to debrief after one race and get ready for the next race. It’s most important to stay focused on all of those things, especially because, with no practice and qualifying, preparation is more important than it’s ever been. As a driver, it’s also important to stay in top shape, physically. So you just need to make time to train your body so you can be fresh at the end of these races. That can have a lot to do with your results on the racetrack.”

**DAVE WINSTON, Crew Chief of the No. 96 Today. Tomorrow. Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:**

**Your thoughts after Sunday’s first race back after the layoff, and your return to Darlington Wednesday?**

“I feel like we’ve got it under control. Yesterday, I felt like we didn’t run very well even though we came away with a 25<sup>th</sup>-place finish. Marty (Gaunt, team owner) and Mark (Chambers, general manager) were good with it. Everybody seemed to be happy, but deep down inside, Daniel and I definitely feel like we want to do better than that. There were positives that came out of Sunday’s race, sure, but there were frustrations, too. I want to give Daniel a much better racecar than we did on Sunday and I know we’re capable of that. He wants to go out and be in a position to win races and knows what it takes to do that, and that’s the way it should be. Right now, it’s a matter of putting in the work to do everything we can to come back Wednesday with a better racecar.”

**What would you consider to be some of the positives that came out of the race on Sunday?**

“I think a big thing was that the track came to us. We got better as the race went along. We were being conservative to start with. Daniel was conservative with the way he attacked the track and I was conservative with the setup because neither of us wanted to hurt the car. Yes, we finished 25<sup>th</sup>, but we still felt like it was maybe a 30<sup>th</sup>-place car. Now, when we go back Wednesday, we can be a little more aggressive and attack the track.”

**With Wednesday’s race being at night after an afternoon race Sunday, will any of what you learned carry over?**

“I think a lot of it will carry over. Darlington has been a night race for a lot of years, and we’re already used to practicing in the daytime and racing at night there and it’s not been a big deal. The track will tighten up as more rubber gets laid down, so you just have to leave yourself plenty of room to free up the car to begin with. That’s how it goes at Darlington and that should be the case this time, too.”

**How did the first race back go for you from a team standpoint after the lengthy layoff?**

“We made no real mistakes, nothing fell off the car, so from that standpoint it went well. Having a competition caution with a cold pit stop was nice because we were able to knock the rust off on that first stop. I think we functioned as a team pretty well. We had to have a reduced number of personnel there so we had to get creative to make sure all the job functions were taken care of, and that came off smoothly. All of our preparation tools worked. Now it’s a matter of using them even more and getting more confident with them. The goal continues to be having a better racecar than last time every time we go to the track.”

**DANIEL SUÁREZ’S DARLINGTON PERFORMANCE PROFILE**

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2020	5/17	The Real Heroes 400	37	25	Running, 292/293	0	N/A
2019	9/1	Southern 500	5	11	Running, 367/367	0	N/A
2018	9/2	Southern 500	16	29	Running, 358/367	0	N/A
2017	9/3	Southern 500	19	38	Accident, 125/367	0	N/A

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