

# 96

**GBR**  
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



## DANIEL SUÁREZ

### Homestead a Very Special Place for Toyota Driver and His Crew Chief

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (June 11, 2020) – It’s always a good thing when a racecar driver and his crew chief are in agreement.

There’s certainly one thing Daniel Suárez, driver of the No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR), and his crew chief Dave Winston can agree on – that Homestead-Miami Speedway is a very special place.

The 1.5-mile South Florida oval, which hosted NASCAR’s season-ending race weekend for 18 consecutive years from 2002 through last November, is where Suárez first made history by clinching the 2015 NASCAR Xfinity Series Rookie of the Year title, then further etched his name into the history books by winning the 2016 Xfinity Series championship. Both are firsts for a Mexican-born driver in a NASCAR national series.

For Winston, who graduated from Southwest Miami Senior High School just up the road and earned his mechanical engineering degree at Florida Atlantic University, the annual Homestead stop on the tour has been a welcome opportunity to check in with friends and family ever since he joined the NASCAR ranks in 2000.

In the 2015 Xfinity Series finale, Suárez drove his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota to a sixth-place finish from his outside-front-row starting spot to edge Bubba Wallace for the rookie title. One year later, the native of Monterrey, Mexico, left little doubt about his championship mettle as he qualified his Toyota on the pole, led seven times for a race-high 133 of 200 laps, and won the race by .968 of a second over Ty Dillon.

Homestead is also where Winston got his first taste of a NASCAR championship when he helped engineer Greg Biffle’s 2002 Xfinity Series title run for Roush-Fenway Racing, sealing the deal at the South Florida track with a fourth-place finish in that year’s finale. The following year, Biffle and Winston were both promoted to Roush-Fenway’s No. 16 Cup Series team, which scored 11 wins over the next three seasons, including a six-win campaign in 2005 that resulted in a second-place finish in the final standings. Winston is particularly proud of three of those wins, which came back-to-back-to-back at Homestead in 2004, 2005 and 2006.

In the years since, he’s been back at Homestead as lead engineer with a variety of drivers and teams, including Brian Vickers and Red Bull Racing – where, coincidentally, he was first hired by GBR team owner Marty Gaunt, who was Red Bull’s general manager at the time. Winston also worked at Homestead with Kurt Busch and Team Penske, Jamie McMurray and Earnhardt-Ganassi Racing, and most recently Paul Menard and Daniel Hemric and Richard Childress Racing. Winston’s only previous visit to Homestead as a Cup Series crew chief was in 2014, when he worked with driver Alex Bowman at BK Racing for the full season.

This weekend, Suárez, Winston and the Cup Series tour pay their first-ever visit to Homestead during the month of June. Sunday afternoon’s Dixie Vodka 400 was originally set for March 22, but the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced a 10-week suspension of the NASCAR schedule. It will be the series’ eighth event since the schedule was resumed May 17, and the 12<sup>th</sup> event together for Suárez and Winston, who joined the single-car No. 96 GBR Toyota team in January for the first full Cup Series campaign in its 10-year history.

Coming off Wednesday night’s gritty 27<sup>th</sup>-place finish at Martinsville (Va.) Speedway, where drivers including Suárez had to deal with the most extreme cockpit temperatures in recent memory, they’ll hope to take another step forward in the evolution of their full-season program with another clean run in the South Florida sunshine Sunday afternoon.

Winston, whose dad owned a Late Model team that raced primarily at the now-shuttered Hialeah Speedway when he was a little boy, would love nothing more than to post the No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry team’s best finish of the season on his home track. And Suárez is ready to continue doing his part.

***DANIEL SUÁREZ, Driver of the No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:***

**You and your fellow drivers had some extreme cockpit temperatures to deal with for 500 laps at Martinsville Wednesday night. How was that for you?**

“It was a super-long race. I was super tired afterward. We had a couple of issues with the ventilation of my helmet. It was very, very warm and very humid at the beginning of the race. It was a brand new helmet and we had some issues with the ventilation and the air flow and the holes in the helmet. We also had other issues, like the heat coming off the brake pedal, a few different things. It was a long

night, but I didn't give up and the team didn't give up on me. In the first stage, I was already cooked, but we didn't give up, we fought. I was very proud of my team, very proud of everything we've been building. Obviously, we're not where we want to be, yet, but we are headed in the right direction in the big picture."

### **Your thoughts about heading to Homestead this weekend?**

"Well, it's a totally different time of year for us to be going to Homestead, so we're doing our best to get our Toyota ready for different conditions than what we are used to. But it's the same for everybody. We learned a lot at Martinsville about the things we need to do to deal with the heat inside the car, so we're focusing a lot on that type of stuff, too. Homestead will always be special to me because of the championship I won there, and the Rookie of the Year before that. It's a great track to race on when you have a good car and the conditions are good. We'll see what it will be like this weekend and hopefully we can have a strong result."

### **DAVE WINSTON, Crew Chief of the No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:**

### **Talk about your days growing up in South Florida and your roundabout journey into NASCAR.**

"I lived in Miami until I was 25. I went to Southwest High School, and I went to college in Palm Beach County. I tried playing football but I wasn't into working out. I played in the marching band and did all kinds of things to stay busy, but my whole goal was trying to figure out how I was going to be able to go racing. I worked at IHOP, at Denny's, anywhere I could make money so I could buy a racecar as soon as I could. My dad had racecars when I was little. He owned a Late Model that raced mostly at Hialeah Speedway and even some races up at Rockingham and Bowman Gray as a field filler in what used to be called the Grand American Series with guys like Richard Childress and Tiny Lund. I think what really turned me on about racing was, when I was 9 years old, we took the family pop-up camper up to Darlington – it was the 1973 Rebel 500. I told my dad that's what I wanted to do. He kind of laughed at me, but that's when I caught the bug. When I was finally old enough to get into it, he was getting out of it because it was too expensive and he couldn't compete. When I was finally able to buy my own racecar, he wouldn't let me bring it to the house, so that was the end of that until I moved up to New England to work corporate engineering jobs after college and I was able to finally go racing on my own at the tracks up there – Thompson and Stafford – in Connecticut. I wanted to be a driver. After 12 years of corporate work, I started getting the Charlotte Sunday paper and scoured the classifieds looking for racing jobs. I was an engineer and wasn't sure I had a skill I could take to a race team. I was working for Performance Friction at the time and that led to my big break at Roush-Fenway."

### **How special is it for you to go to Homestead-Miami Speedway to race each year?**

"The cool thing about going back is that I still have friends I went to school with and I get to see them and talk to them. I grew up 20 miles from where the track is. The coolest thing was when we won three years in a row there with (Greg) Biffle. I got Dad a pit pass and everything, and he got to go to victory lane with us. That was special. It's neat to do stuff where you grew up. Homestead has always been one of the best races as far as competitiveness goes. I enjoy going there for the challenge."

### **What are your thoughts about where this team is as you head to Homestead this weekend?**

"It's been nice to be able to just show up and race, the way it's been done, lately. But not being able to practice and qualify, the big fear is to see your performance stagnate. I feel like we don't have the opportunity to try very many things because we get right to racing and you have to try and improve the car in real time. Daniel does an unbelievable job as a racer and a driver in dealing with the situation we are in, being a small, one-car team. Not having a charter really puts us behind the eight-ball each race because the best we're going to start is 37<sup>th</sup>. We had a car that we weren't entirely happy with at Bristol, but we kept fighting and ended up with our best finish. Daniel has the talent to get everything out of the car and not abuse the car. We definitely have the right driver for what we are trying to accomplish. We'll get there."

## **DANIEL SUÁREZ'S HOMESTEAD PERFORMANCE PROFILE**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>	<b>Status/Laps</b>	<b>Laps Led</b>	<b>Earnings</b>
<b>2019</b>	11/17	Ford EcoBoost 400	17	14	Running, 266/267	0	N/A
<b>2018</b>	11/18	Ford EcoBoost 400	18	30	Running, 262/267	0	N/A
<b>2017</b>	11/19	Ford EcoBoost 400	10	34	Brakes, 225/267	0	N/A

**-TSC-**

Contact Laz Denes with True Speed Communication

(704) 875-3388, ext. 806 or [Laz.Denes@TrueSpeedCommunication.com](mailto:Laz.Denes@TrueSpeedCommunication.com)

[www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com](http://www.TrueSpeedCommunication.com) • Online Media Kit Available at: [www.TrueSpeedMedia.com](http://www.TrueSpeedMedia.com)