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GBR
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



DANIEL SUÁREZ

Looking for a Kick Start to the 2020 Campaign in Las Vegas

MOORESVILLE, N.C. (Feb. 19, 2020) – There’s nothing like a little West Coast Swing to kick start the fortunes of the newest full-time competitors in the NASCAR Cup Series garage – the No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry of Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) and its driver, Mexico native Daniel Suárez.

The second, third and fourth stops on the 2020 Cup Series tour are on tap the next three weekends and take Suárez and his new teammates to three distinctly different racetracks, but all situated in desert-like surroundings similar to his hometown of Monterrey, the capital of the Northern Mexico state of Nuevo León.

This year’s West Coast Swing begins with Sunday’s Pennzoil 400 on the Las Vegas Motor Speedway 1.5-mile oval, continues March 1 with the Auto Club 400 on the ultrafast 2-mile Auto Club Speedway oval in Fontana, California, and concludes March 8 with the FanShield 500k on the tricky Phoenix Raceway mile oval.

It will be the first, full West Coast Swing for the GBR team, which joined the NASCAR Cup Series ranks as a part-time competitor in 2017 and is taking on the full slate of 36 points-paying races for the first time in 2020. The No. 96 Toyota team has twice graced the Las Vegas oval, starting 35th and finishing 25th with driver Jeffrey Earnhardt in the September 2018 race, and starting 32nd and finishing 31st with driver Parker Kligerman in last year’s March race. The team will be competing at Fontana for the first time this year, while its only previous Phoenix appearance was in March 2018, when D.J. Kennington qualified 34th and finished 31st.

Suárez, meanwhile, is a veteran of West Coast Swings, having made the annual trek to the Nevada-California-Arizona desert for the back-to-back-to-back races since his first full NASCAR Xfinity Series season in 2015. He had a particularly solid run during his 2016 Xfinity Series championship season, when he posted finishes of second, third and fourth at Las Vegas, Phoenix and Fontana, respectively.

This weekend, Suárez is eyeing his sixth career Cup Series appearance at Las Vegas, where he has an average start of 14.4, an average finish of 18.2, and 42 laps led. Last September, he qualified on the front row and led 29 of the first 30 laps of the 267-lap race, finishing fourth in the opening stage and maintaining his position in the top-15 through the second stage. But then, on a lap-185 restart, he was caught in a multicar pileup that damaged his racecar. After pitting for repairs, he was able to conserve fuel enough to salvage a 20th-place finish. Suárez also led 12 laps in last year’s March race en route to a 17th-place finish from the 22nd starting position.

Suárez’s crew chief Dave Winston, a veteran of 61 Cup Series races atop the pit box, called the shots at two previous races on the Las Vegas oval. He collaborated with driver Alex Bowman and the No. 23 BK Racing Toyota on a 37th-place finish in the March 2014 race, and with Michael McDowell and the No. 95 Leavine Family Racing entry on a 29th-place finish in the March 2016 race.

As they head west for the first time this season with their new-look GBR team for 2020, Suárez, Winston and their No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry look to rebound in a big way from last weekend’s abrupt ending to their bid to make the season-opening Daytona 500 field. With their seasoned cast and crew giving it their all, it’s a good bet that good things just might happen in Las Vegas.

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

You move on to the second race of the season at Las Vegas. What’s your and the team’s mindset after the goings-on at Daytona?

“Obviously, it was very frustrating to not be able to race in the Daytona 500. That would have been the best way to kick off the season with this Gaunt Brothers team, all the new parts and pieces and people. I wouldn’t call what happened at Daytona disappointing because nobody ever said this was supposed to be easy. It was more frustrating because, even though we didn’t have the raw speed in qualifying, we showed in practice and all through the first half of our Duel that we had the car to get the job done. We were leading the other open cars after our pit stop and all we had to do was stay out of trouble. Unfortunately, we got caught up in something we couldn’t control and that was all she wrote. We go to Las Vegas looking for a better outcome and, there, too, just take care of what we can control.”

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In joining Gaunt Brothers, which is a one-car team compared to the four-car teams you drove for the previous three years, how do you set your goals knowing that the circumstances are completely different?

“Yeah, I feel like it’s a process. I feel like it’s a process that we have to be smart in the way that we race, the way we do our jobs, everything. We have to be building this team. We’re at the point where we’re still working to try to get some people, some engineers and stuff like that. It’s going to continue being a process. But the goal is to be a winning team – it’s to build this into a winning team. If you think about it, there is not one single Toyota team that is bad. The goal is to make this another competitive Toyota team and that’s not going to happen at the first race, or the second race. It’s going to take time, a lot of work. We believe that we have what it takes.”

Is it great to be back with Toyota after being away for a year?

“Toyota has been one of the best sponsors, supporters that I ever had. Some of you guys don’t know, but Toyota and I, we go way back since before I moved to the U.S. I was supported by Toyota Mexico. Then I came here to the diversity program supported by Toyota. The national series by Toyota, I mean, we have made history together. To be very honest with you, last year I missed Toyota the most. Toyota is a great manufacturer. They pay a lot of attention to detail. There’s a lot of great people, a lot of great people in this organization. I’m just very proud to be back with this group of people.”

You say you missed Toyota the most?

“It’s not that I missed them. There were a lot of things, a lot of good people, a lot of friends, a lot of people that it just doesn’t feel awkward at all to be back with them. It’s one of those situations that it’s kind of like when you’re in a relationship with someone for that long, you feel awkward being out of that circle, then you come back, you don’t feel awkward coming back, right? That’s how it feels. I’ve been with Toyota for more than 10 years. Every year I’ve been with Toyota in NASCAR but last year. It doesn’t feel awkward at all to be back with them.”

What do you expect on the Las Vegas oval this weekend?

“It’s just the next step in the process for this new Gaunt Brothers team, and that is going to be the case every race we go to. We have four completely different kinds of tracks in the first four races, so that is a challenge in itself for a team that is still coming together, that is working hard to build the cars we need for a full season. For me, Las Vegas has been one of my favorite tracks. I’ve had some good results there and I have led laps there. Unfortunately, I haven’t been able to put together a winning effort there, yet. I like the atmosphere at Las Vegas and I think we will be able to show what this team is made of, even though it is still very early in the program.”

DANIEL SUÁREZ’S LAS VEGAS PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led
2019	9/15	South Point 400	2	20	Running, 266/267	29
	3/3	Pennzoil 400	22	17	Running, 267/267	12
2018	9/16	South Point 400	19	8	Running, 272/272	0
	3/4	Las Vegas 400	18	26	Running, 263/267	0
2017	3/12	Kobalt 400	11	20	Running, 267/267	0
2019	9/15	South Point 400	2	20	Running, 266/267	29

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