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DANIEL SUÁREZ

Father's Day at Talladega

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (June 16, 2020) – Sunday is Father's Day, and Daniel Suárez, driver of the No. 96 CommScope Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR), will forever be grateful for the sacrifices made by his dad Alejandro that enabled him to reach the pinnacle of stock car racing as a NASCAR Cup Series driver.

His dad owned a modest car restoration shop in their hometown of Monterrey, Mexico, a place where Suárez helped out as a young child and developed a serious love for automobiles. When his dad bought him his first go-kart, Suárez caught the racing bug in a big way, and he began competing on a local and regional level in his native country at the age of 11, winning track championships from the start and also a pair of national karting titles. He then won races and championships as he advanced through the ranks of the Volks Sports Series and Mini-Stocks on his way to the NASCAR Mexico Series, where he enjoyed a successful four-year run.

Along the way, his dad recognized Suárez's talent and wanted him to be able to make the most of it, so he sold the restoration shop, and later mortgaged the family home, to generate the funds to allow young Suárez to continue racing at the highest levels possible. He proved his racing mettle in the United States during a relatively rapid rise through the NASCAR ranks, springboarding his way to the elite Cup Series by winning the 2016 Xfinity Series championship. All the while, those sacrifices made by his dad had stayed in the back of Suárez's mind.

It was then Suárez was finally able to do something he'd been wanting to do for a long time – start a brand new restoration business for his father back in Monterrey to pay him back for all of his sacrifices through the years. On top of the race wins and championships, that is what truly makes Suárez happy.

His father is also who Suárez credits for teaching him a relentless work ethic – the constant determination to push to get things done and make things happen. Most recently, it's that work ethic Suárez is banking on, in addition to his talent as a racecar driver, as he helps the one-car GBR Toyota team transition from a part-time to full-time Cup Series competitor for the first time in 2020. He and his teammates know it's a long-term project that will take time and patience, but the racers inside them are champing at the bit to be successful each and every time they take to the track.

Their next chance comes Sunday afternoon when the Cup Series visits Talladega (Ala.) Superspeedway for the GEICO 500. It's a track where Suárez scored five consecutive top-20 finishes before getting caught up in a multicar accident and then cutting a tire to end his day 20 laps before the finish last October while with Stewart-Haas Racing. His best Talladega Cup Series finish is 10th while with Joe Gibbs Racing in the fall 2018 race. In that race last October, Parker Kligerman drove the No. 96 GBR Toyota to a 15th-place finish, the team's best in four Talladega outings as a part-time competitor.

Suárez and his CommScope Toyota team will be especially motivated to make the most of Sunday's superspeedway race after their first weekend together at Talladega's sister track Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway ended prematurely. An accident in Suárez's Duel qualifying race knocked him and the team out of the Daytona 500 and got their season off to a disappointing start. But they've soldiered on ever since, scoring their first top-25 finish together in the season's fourth race at Phoenix Raceway, adding another top-25 at Darlington (S.C.) Raceway in May, and scoring their first top-20 with an 18th-place run at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway three weekends ago.

With the team's solid history at superspeedway events, and the unpredictable, "anything can happen at any time" nature of the races at Daytona and Talladega, Suárez and the CommScope Toyota team will hope to put themselves in position to score a solid finish come Sunday afternoon in Alabama.

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

You're going to Talladega for the first time as driver on a single-car Cup Series team. How important are teammates at Talladega, and what do you expect this Sunday, especially with no practice and a new set of rules to reduce horsepower?

"Obviously, teammates are very important to being successful at Talladega. We have a different rules package again for this race, but no matter what, when you go to a superspeedway, teammates will always be important. We may be a one-car team with our CommScope Toyota, but we are very much a part of Team Toyota, and together we can be very strong. We seemed to work very well together in practice at Daytona. Unfortunately, things didn't go our way in the qualifying race so we never got to see what we could do with them

in the race. Yes, the cars will be different this weekend with the new changes, and we won't have a chance to practice or qualify to see how the cars will react to those changes. But it's the same for everybody. We are all racers and we will figure it out as we go, and do the usual things you do at a superspeedway, which is to stay out of trouble and put yourself in the best position for the end."

With Sunday being Father's Day, what can you say about what your father means to you?

"I guess the person who inspired me the most, for sure, is my father. My family doesn't come from money. My father, to put me in racing, had to sacrifice, not just for him but for the whole family. My father actually bought me a go-kart and at that point I realized I wanted to race, so we went into the go-kart world. When I was racing, there was some money spent there that wasn't used somewhere else. Before I was born, my father had a car restoration shop. He sold that shop to continue to support my career. Later on, my father mortgaged our house. My mom was not happy about it, but they wanted me to have that opportunity. Luckily, things started to work out. We made it to the top series in NASCAR Mexico. And he said, 'You made it to the top of NASCAR Mexico and you're only 18 years old. What will come next?' A few years later, I got a shot with Joe Gibbs Racing. When I won the (Xfinity Series) championship back in 2016, I was extremely excited and he was excited, too. After a few days, he told me, 'Hey, it doesn't matter what, but always try to find the next challenge,' and the next challenge was the Cup Series. When things started going well in my career, I was able to go back to my dad and tell him I wanted to put the shop he sold back together. So, several years ago, we started a brand new restoration shop with the same name, and that for me is one of the coolest things I've ever done, just to give him back what he gave up for me. I feel like that is something I learned from him, how hard he pushed to get things done and to just make things happen. You need to have that person on your side to help you, and luckily I have a father like him. Without him, I wouldn't be here right now."

Looking back at last Sunday's race at Homestead, how do you feel that went for you and the team?

"Sunday's race was a little crazy. Obviously, we had a lot of start and stop and start and stop and go again with all the lightning around the track. But let me tell you the team did a very good job, Dave (Winston) my crew chief and the whole group, with the balance of the car. The balance of the car was very good, it was very strong. The problem is we are still lacking a lot of downforce in our racecars, we still have a lot of work to do in that department. But we are going to keep digging, keep on fighting, making these cars and keep improving. Baby steps."

DANIEL SUÁREZ'S TALLADEGA PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	10/14	1000Bulbs.com 500	19	32	Accident, 168/188	0	N/A
	4/28	Geico 500	16	12	Running, 188/188	0	N/A
2018	10/14	1000Bulbs.com 500	13	16	Running, 193/193	0	N/A
	4/29	Geico 500	14	10	Running, 188/188	1	N/A
2017	10/15	Alabama 500	14	15	Accident, 184/188	11	N/A
	5/7	Geico 500	7	19	Running, 191/191	0	N/A

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