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GBR
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



DANIEL SUÁREZ

Looking To Benefit from Previous Successes at Kentucky

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (July 7, 2020) – Coming off his and his still relatively young team’s second top-20 finish of the season last Sunday at the iconic Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Daniel Suárez and his No. 96 Toyota Certified Used Vehicles Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) will hit the track this Sunday just down the road at Kentucky Speedway in Sparta, one of Suárez’s best racetracks in all three of NASCAR’s top touring series.

The 28-year-old Suárez is the most recent NASCAR Cup Series pole award winner on the 1.5-mile Kentucky oval, having snatched the top qualifying spot in his Stewart-Haas Racing entry a year ago this weekend. He went on to lead 52 laps on race day before bringing home an eighth-place finish.

In his four Kentucky outings in the NASCAR Xfinity Series, in which he won Rookie of the Year honors in 2015 and the overall championship in 2016, Suárez has earned three front-row qualifying positions, including the pole in the September 2015 race, and three top-four finishes. He was second to Elliott Sadler in the September 2016 race, third to winner and then-Joe Gibbs Racing teammate Kyle Busch and runner-up Austin Dillon in the July 2016 race, and fourth to winner Brad Keselowski, runner-up and then-Gibbs teammate Erik Jones and third-place Busch in the July 2015 race.

And in his two career Kentucky appearances in the NASCAR Gander RV & Outdoors Truck Series, both with Kyle Busch Motorsports, Suárez started and finished fourth after leading 18 laps in 2015, and started on the pole and finished 11th after leading 59 laps in 2016.

This weekend, in his fourth career Cup Series outing at Kentucky, Suárez returns to the Bluegrass State with his single-car GBR team that is competing in the Cup Series full-time for the first time since joining the series in 2018. It will be just the 54th Cup Series outing for GBR – a mere season-and-a-half worth of races competing against multicar organizations, many of which have been around for decades.

Suárez and his GBR team feel confident they will one day be racing for wins against those larger, more established organizations, and they know full well that it will take time. Grinding out finishes like last Sunday’s 20th place at Indy, in which the team fixed a power steering fluid leak and related alternator issues during the first half of the race, are the signs of the incremental progress the team is determined to continue from week to week.

At this Sunday’s 400-mile race, Suárez and his GBR team look to take another successful step forward in their evolution together, and perhaps benefit in big ways from his previous successes on the state of Kentucky’s second-most-famous racetrack.

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

You’re headed to Kentucky, a track where you’ve had a good bit of success the last several years in all three of NASCAR’s top series with larger, established teams. What are your expectations as you head back this weekend?

“For us, this is obviously a different situation. As everyone knows, I had a very difficult two years. As a driver, something that’s very important is chemistry and people. Since I moved to the Cup Series, I hadn’t had more than six months of consistency, there was always a change somewhere – crew chief, engineers, something – and I struggled a lot with that. That has sort of been the story of my career so far in the Cup Series and I’m trying to fix that. This new team is obviously taking some time to build. And, some people don’t think about this because this pandemic is affecting everyone, but it’s really affecting this team that is just building, just trying to get better and trying to learn. It’s been a difficult process for us because, in the beginning, we didn’t have engineers, we didn’t have a lot of people, so it’s been a process for us just to go to the racetrack and race. Practice was extremely important for us. We’ve been in the middle of developing our simulation program, developing many different things, and I feel like we’re getting better, that we know what we’re lacking. It’s very important to know what is your problem so you can be able to fix it. Two months ago, we didn’t know what the problem was, we only knew it was speed. Today, we know what the problem is, so we’re working hard to fix it. But obviously it’s a process and it takes some time. Hopefully, in the next month and a half, we’ll see some progress in our speed and keep building. And to me, something that’s extremely important is the people, to just keep consistency with a good group of people and start to build chemistry, which is something I was struggling with the last couple of years.”

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Last weekend, you were part of the historic IndyCar/NASCAR doubleheader weekend at Indy, which prompted the question about why you chose to pursue NASCAR rather than follow the footsteps of famous Mexican open-wheel racers like Adrian Fernandez, Michel Jourdain and Josele Garza?

“The real story is that I was never expecting to be a racecar driver. My family doesn’t come from money, my dad didn’t have any idea about racing. When I started racing, it was just for fun because a customer of my dad was into racing. At the time, I didn’t know anything about ovals. In Mexico, we didn’t have one oval in the entire country. I knew about NASCAR, I used to watch NASCAR, but I had no idea how to get there, and I really didn’t have any goals about being in NASCAR. Once I started racing more and more, I started to find sponsors and find different opportunities to race in the U.S., I raced in Europe some. Then I found out I was going to need a lot of sponsors to make it happen, it’s very expensive. That’s the point when I started thinking about what I was going to do next. That year, in 2009, I remember sitting, a kid of 17 years, sitting with Carlos Slim, with Jim Morales. At the time I was all about open wheel and Carlos actually gave me an opportunity to go to England. And Jim Morales, he was big into NASCAR, he said, ‘Daniel, you have two options – you can go to England to race over there, or you can go to NASCAR to race in Mexico for a year or two, and then try to go to the U.S. and you can be the very first Mexican to actually make it to the top.’ I told him that’s what I wanted to do. That’s when I started focusing on ovals in Mexico, and a year later I came to the U.S. to learn the language and learn the culture here, and here I am. It’s been a process but it’s crazy how a little decision 12, 13 years ago can change the whole story of my entire life. It changed everything. I felt like going to Europe was a lot of fun and it could have been a good experience, but I’m just very happy I made the decision to come to the U.S. – it’s an amazing country, amazing people – and obviously to come to NASCAR.”

Do you have any urge to try and race an Indy car some day?

“Indy cars, I think they’re a lot of fun. I think, on ovals, they are quite scary because they go very fast and, in my opinion, when they wreck on ovals, it doesn’t look like too much fun. These cars are made for road-course racing. I grew up in Mexico watching IndyCar racing in my hometown. That was around the beginning of my racing when, at one point when I wasn’t racing ovals, I raced Formula Renault in Mexico. So I love open wheel, I love road-course racing. The biggest difference between and Indy car and a stock car is the braking point because those guys have so much downforce and their cars are so light that they can almost (not have to) brake until they’re in the corner. That’s different than what we are able to do, but it would be great to have an experience like that.”

DANIEL SUÁREZ’S KENTUCKY PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	7/13	Quaker State 400	1	8	Running, 269/269	52	N/A
2018	7/14	Quaker State 400	11	15	Running, 267/267	0	N/A
2017	7/8	Quaker State 400	9	18	Running, 273/274	0	N/A

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Contact Laz Denes with True Speed Communication

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

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