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DANIEL SUÁREZ

CommScope Driver Eyes Daytona Return in Coke Zero Sugar 400

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (Aug. 26, 2020) – Daniel Suárez and the No. 96 CommScope Toyota Camry team for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) head to Saturday night's Coke Zero Sugar 400 NASCAR Cup Series race ready to attack the Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway oval for the first time together in a points-paying race.

Saturday night's 400-miler under the lights is a race Suárez and the single-car team he joined just prior to the start of the season have not necessarily been fixated upon. But after February's heartbreaking turn of events on the 2.5-mile superspeedway oval in their Duel qualifying race for the 62nd Daytona 500, they can't be blamed for wondering what might have been, nor for circling this weekend's return date to "The World Center of Racing" as a chance for redemption.

An unfortunate collision while in position to claim one of the coveted Daytona 500 starting spots during Duel 1 brought an abrupt and unexpected end to the team's first race weekend together. But the 28-year-old Suárez, whose new team took on the full 36-race schedule for the first time since joining the Cup Series ranks in 2017, took little time to shake off the disappointment and have soldiered on ever since.

Entering Saturday night's event, Suárez has reeled off 24 consecutive races in which he and his No. 96 Toyota have been running at the finish, making him and regular-season points champion Kevin Harvick the only two drivers to do so. And the native of Monterrey, Mexico who's in his fourth Cup Series season and his new team have shown consistency and timely signs of progress in their steady and calculated mission to compete week in and week out with the much larger and long-established Cup Series teams. Seven top-25 finishes, including bests of 18th at Bristol (Tenn.) Motor Speedway and Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, as well as a 20th-place run at the Brickyard 400 at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, are modest indicators that they're heading in the right direction.

Deep down inside, Suárez and his GBR teammates know the best is yet to come, and they'll stay the course they laid out and have been executing together since joining forces mere weeks since arriving at Daytona for the first time last February. And during Saturday night's Coke Zero Sugar 400, they just might have a little extra motivation for putting up their best result to date.

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

What will be your approach as you and the team head to Daytona for Saturday night's Coke Zero Sugar 400?

"We have to be very, very smart. It's one of those things where you have to control what you can control. We have to race, we have to make the car drive good, we have to make the car make moves and, if we can do that and if we can drive through the field and stay up front, which I have learned is the safest place on superspeedways – sometimes I have got the break in running in the top-five. You never know, it's never safe to be in the pack. We just have to be smart and do a good race. I believe we have a fast car to do the job in the draft and, obviously, I know what we need to do to try and get the job done."

Talk about the importance of teammates during the superspeedway races at Daytona and Talladega.

"Obviously, teammates are very important to being successful on a superspeedway. We raced at Talladega with a different rules package and we saw that 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 back in February. 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 were different at Talladega with the new changes, and we didn't have a chance to practice or qualify to see how the cars would react to those changes, but we learned a lot on race day. In the end, 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."

We saw your fellow Monterrey native Pat O'Ward post a strong finish in the Indy 500 last weekend. How does it feel to be representing Mexico on the world stage with your countrymen like O'Ward in IndyCar and Sergio Perez in Formula One?

"I'm friends with both of them, we race in the top level of different disciplines – Formula 1, NASCAR and IndyCar, in my opinion, are the most important in the world. And it's important to be competitive. David Wilson, the president of TRD, reminded me of something I said years ago, and that was, when I came to this country back in 2011, I came to this country to be competitive and to win races. I

didn't come to this country to just ride and have fun and to say I'm a Cup driver. That's not what I want. If that would happen, that would be the time I will have to do something else. There might be people who feel like the team I'm with right now is not competitive, but we have a plan to get there. It feels extremely good to be one of those Mexican drivers who have been successful in racing, and for me, personally, the face of NASCAR in Mexico and Latin America."

DANIEL SUÁREZ'S DAYTONA PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	7/7	Coke Zero Sugar 400	15	40	Accident, 83/127	0	N/A
	2/17	Daytona 500	23	33	Accident, 190/200	0	N/A
2018	7/7	Coke Zero Sugar 400	32	35	Accident, 54/168	0	N/A
	2/26	Daytona 500	17	37	Accident, 59/207	0	N/A
2017	7/1	Coke Zero 400	20	17	Running, 163/163	11	N/A
	2/26	Daytona 500	19	29	Accident, 141/200	0	N/A

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