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DANIEL SUÁREZ

CommScope Driver Sees Opportunity in Daytona Road Course

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (Aug. 11, 2020) – As Daniel Suárez and his No. 96 CommScope Toyota team for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) head to the road course at Daytona (Fla.) International Speedway for Sunday’s NASCAR Cup Series Go Bowling 235, the theme in so many respects is “uncharted territory.”

For the 28-year-old native of Monterrey, Mexico, 2020 saw him join the single-car team that for the first time committed to the full season’s slate of races since it joined the Cup Series ranks in 2018. Uncharted territory.

Just four race weekends into the season, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a halt, including an unprecedented 10-week suspension of the NASCAR schedule before its return to racing in mid-May under strict health and safety protocols and race weekends that had no practice or qualifying. Uncharted territory.

This weekend, the series heads for the first time to the otherwise iconic road course on the Central Florida coast, which since 1966 has hosted one of the crown jewels in all of sportscar racing – the Rolex 24 At Daytona. Uncharted territory.

So far through their 21 races this season, Suárez and GBR have navigated their carefully planned path to Cup Series competitiveness with consistency. The 2015 Rookie of the Year and 2016 champion of the NASCAR Xfinity Series who spent 2017 and 2018 driving the No. 19 Cup Series Toyota for Joe Gibbs Racing and 2019 driving the No. 41 entry for Stewart-Haas Racing has completed every race in which he’s competed in 2020, the only driver other than points leader Kevin Harvick to do so. He’s logged three top-20 finishes and seven top-25s, which is a modest accomplishment but magnified by the fact they’ve been relegated to a starting position of 37th at all but four races since the mid-May return to racing because GBR is a non-chartered team.

From an operational standpoint, they’ve also navigated the weekly racing routine since NASCAR’s return to competition on par with the most established competitors despite being a single-car operation.

As they head to the 3.57-mile, 14-turn Daytona road course for the first time in Cup Series history, Suárez and his GBR teammates hope the fact there will be no practice or qualifying once again might be a great equalizer between the small teams and those that have been part of the series for decades. Sunday’s opening pace laps will be the first time the entire field of drivers will have driven their respective, 3,500-pound stock cars on this particular layout, which features a frontstretch chicane newly added just for this weekend’s slate of races. Talk about uncharted territory.

Suárez has enjoyed a measure of success competing on road courses during his rise through the stock-car-racing ranks. He drove a Toyota to victory on his hometown Autodromo de Monterrey road course in the 2013 NASCAR Peak Mexico Series in one of his first of 26 career road-course races behind the wheel of a stock car. He posted a runner-up finish in a 2013 NASCAR K&N Pro Series East race at Road Atlanta that same year. Twice he finished fourth on road courses in his Gibbs Toyota – at Watkins Glen (N.Y.) International and at Road America in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin – during his 2016 Xfinity Series championship season. And he has a best Cup Series road-course start of fifth and finish of third with 14 laps led in his Gibbs Toyota at Watkins Glen in 2017.

As he heads into uncharted territory at Daytona this weekend with his fellow Cup Series competitors, there’s one constant in his recent career that will be riding along with him for the first of five consecutive races – primary sponsor CommScope. The company was known as ARRIS back in 2015 when it sponsored Suárez’s Gibbs Toyota in the Xfinity Series, and it has been with him every year since. And CommScope has not only stuck with Suárez, it has helped millions of race fans stay connected at the racetrack, at home and everywhere in-between with its wireless technologies.

Sunday’s race marks the milestone 60th Cup Series start for GBR. Look for Suárez, his crew chief Dave Winston and the rest of the team to pull out all the stops as they navigate their way through the Cup Series’ maiden voyage on the iconic Daytona road course.

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

How are you approaching this weekend’s race on the Daytona road course? Do you see it as a great equalizer?

“I do. First of all, when they told us we were going into that race with no practice, I thought it was a joke. I didn’t think that was actually going to happen. Every single person who asked me or told me about it, I said, ‘No way, there’s no way it’s going to happen

(without practice).’ But here we are. It’s going to happen. I’m excited about it. I definitely want to be in my CommScope Toyota, but I kind of want to be outside the car to see all the mistakes that are going to happen. I think it’s going to be interesting. We don’t get to practice, so we are working very hard outside the racetrack to prepare ourselves. Between the simulator and raw data and the tools we are very fortunate to have with Toyota, with TRD, developing all these tools for us, we are preparing ourselves as much as possible without actually going to a real, live racetrack.”

What have you learned about the track from the simulator?

“It’s something pretty similar to the ‘roval’ at Charlotte. It’s very similar, probably faster, but very similar. You have one or two chicanes, you have a very slick racetrack, and you don’t have forward drive, which is kind of what you fight at Charlotte on the ‘roval.’ I think it’s going to be interesting. I enjoy watching the 24 Hours of Daytona so much. I usually watch at least six or eight hours of that race. So I’m excited to go to this place and try to have a good, solid day for our CommScope Toyota, which has been getting better every weekend. I’m excited to get into road-course mode and see what we’ve got.”

This is the first of five consecutive races with CommScope as your primary sponsor. Talk about that relationship, which dates back to your NASCAR Xfinity Series Rookie of the Year season in 2015.

“Obviously, a lot has happened in my career since my rookie year in the Xfinity Series, but one constant has been my sponsor ARRIS, which is now CommScope, and they’re in their sixth year supporting me. I’m extremely thankful that CommScope has stuck with me all these years. Not only has CommScope stuck with me, they have helped millions of race fans stay connected at the racetrack, at home and everywhere in-between with their wireless technologies.”

DAVE WINSTON, Crew Chief of the No. 96 Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing:

You’ll actually get to start the race better than 37th this week with NASCAR’s new performance-based formula to set the starting grid. How has having to start 37th at most races since returning from the COVID-19 hiatus affected the team?

“Daniel is a heck of a restarter, and we’ve often had a car that was decent on short runs and he actually has been able to make up quite a bit of ground. Every week, without having a charter, we were starting 37th. We’d be back there and we don’t have a chance of starting any better than that. He kind of has treated it like a personal challenge and I think he kind of looked forward to it because you get to go out there to try and pass some cars and have some fun. But it’s hard to have to do that week in and week out. The competition cautions usually gave us a chance to not go a lap down early in the race. But at some tracks, the leaders could still run you down pretty quickly.”

With the limited personnel allowed at the track since the restart, we’ve seen even some crew chiefs take on pit stop responsibilities, but so far you’ve been able to stay atop the pit box. Can you talk about that?

“So far, we’ve gotten that figured out where I can pretty much stay up there, make sure he gets in the box, make sure that everything’s getting done, and make sure he gets out of the box. I’ve seen other crew chiefs who get down and, whether they’re jumping over the wall and rolling tires or doing anything like that, it kind of goes back to old-school, how they used to do it. The crew chiefs used to jump over and change tires. But, at this point, so far I’ve stayed up on the box and we’ve had enough people over the wall to orchestrate everything that needs to get done.”

DANIEL SUÁREZ’S ROAD-COURSE PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	9/29	Bank of America Roval 400 (Charlotte)	13	34	Running, 108/109	0	N/A
	8/4	Go Bowling at The Glen (Watkins Glen)	18	17	Running, 90/90	0	N/A
	6/23	Toyota/SaveMart 350k (Sonoma)	5	17	Running, 90/90	0	N/A
2018	9/30	Bank of America Roval 400 (Charlotte)	17	21	Running, 109/109	0	N/A
	8/5	Go Bowling at The Glen (Watkins Glen)	21	4	Running, 90/90	0	N/A
	6/24	Toyota/SaveMart 350k (Sonoma)	16	15	Running, 110/110	0	N/A
2017	8/6	I Love New York 355k (Watkins Glen)	5	3	Running, 90/90	14	N/A
	6/25	Toyota/SaveMart 350k (Sonoma)	11	16	Running, 110/110	0	N/A

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