

# 96

**GBR**  
GAUNT BROTHERS RACING



## DANIEL SUÁREZ

### Toyota Driver Returns to Michigan, Where He Made History in 2016

MOORESVILLE, North Carolina (Aug. 4, 2020) – For Daniel Suárez, driver of the No. 96 Toyota Camry for Gaunt Brothers Racing (GBR) in the NASCAR Cup Series, Michigan International Speedway in Brooklyn will forever be the place where winning on the national stage began.

The 28-year-old native of Monterrey, Mexico, who's in his fourth full Cup Series campaign and first with the single-car GBR team, made history on the lightning-fast, 2-mile Michigan oval in the June 2016 NASCAR Xfinity Series race with his next-to-last-lap pass of then-Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota teammate Kyle Busch, then driving away for the first win by a Mexican-born driver in a NASCAR national series event.

The victory prompted an emotional celebration by Suárez and his team, and led Busch to declare in his postrace commentary, "Student beat teacher today." It also springboarded Suárez's run to that year's Xfinity Series championship as he went on to win twice more in dominating fashion – in October at Dover (Del.) International Speedway and from the pole in November's season finale at Homestead-Miami Speedway – in becoming the first Mexican-born driver to win a NASCAR national series title.

Suárez returns to the Irish Hills of Michigan this weekend for a pair of Cup Series races that make up the second of three Saturday-Sunday doubleheaders on the 2020 schedule. He and his relatively young, single-car team posted finishes of 28<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> in the previous doubleheader June 27 and 28 at Pocono (Pa.) Raceway and look to take another step forward in their development effort with a pair of stronger outings this weekend. They're coming off last Sunday's 26<sup>th</sup>-place finish on the mile oval at New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon that fell one spot short of their seventh top-25 of the season.

Last year's two visits to Michigan netted Suárez's best finishes in six previous Cup Series outings at the track. He drove his Stewart-Haas Racing entry to a pair of top-fives – fourth in the June race and fifth in the August race.

It will be that pair of solid Cup Series finishes last year, and that memory of a lifetime prompted by his historic Xfinity Series victory in 2016, that will no doubt be riding along with Suárez in spirit as he and his GBR teammates navigate their way through this weekend's pair of 312-mile races – Saturday's Firekeepers Casino 400 and Sunday's Consumers Energy 400.

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

#### **What are your thoughts about this weekend's doubleheader at Michigan?**

"Michigan is the kind of racetrack where you have to have a lot of straightaway speed and try to be as good as possible in the corners. You would think that because we have one of the best engine programs out there with Toyota and TRD that we would be going extremely fast in the straightaways. But that's not necessarily the case. You have to have a good downforce car in combination with drag to be able to go fast in the straightaways. I know that even though we are a small team, we are slowly trying to build better stuff and the better stuff is going to start showing up. We're still learning from many things. For me, it's extremely important to help build the chemistry, to help build the team so we are ready to punch hard once we get better racecars."

#### **You seem to have the perfect attitude for a driver in your situation, helping to grow and improve your single-car GBR team. Talk about how that has been going, from your perspective.**

"I've been extremely fortunate that I've had strong organizations behind me the last few years. But the people who've known me for many years, they know that hasn't been the case in the past. I've been one of those drivers who has had to win races with less and I'm used to that. I've done that many times here in the U.S., and in Mexico and in many categories. For me, that's no problem. I'm very confident in myself and I'm a very positive person. I know what I can do and I'm the last person who's going to give up on myself. But it's a process. We're not in a sport like soccer, where you can work out, train, and you're going to be as good as you work out and as good as you train. Here in racing, it's different. Here you have many people, cars, engines, engineers, simulation – I can work 24/7 and the results may not show because it's just a combination of everything. It's a process, you have to be smart, you have to be a leader, and you have to be confident that you know you can do this. Once you get those results, once you get those victories, it's a boost that shows all the work you've been doing for months, for years, whatever time that turns out to be, is paying off."

**Your thoughts about heading to Michigan for this weekend's doubleheader?**

“Daniel has taken really good care of our equipment so far and, knock on wood, we haven't had anything bad happen where we lost a car. And, not taking backup cars to the races on a regular basis, and not having practice or qualifying, we've got cars sitting in the shop that we've been working on, and we're turning them around pretty quickly from race to race. The car we're taking to Michigan is a car we've run this year at California, Darlington and Atlanta, and then we've re-bodied it for Michigan. We feel really good going to the track with something we've worked with and actually had in the wind tunnel, so we're looking forward to that. Our backup car is the car we ran at Kansas and Indy.”

**As a relatively young, single-car team, is it any more challenging than it is for the larger, more established teams to race each week with no practice or qualifying?**

“There's good and bad to it for everybody. I've been doing this for 20 years and you think you know what you're doing, you want to get better. But when you show up and we don't get a chance to practice or try things, it's hit or miss. You talk about people having different luck, a lot of it is just not having a chance to practice. As a team, we keep going to these races and hoping to run better. But we're also trying to manage our expectations and keep learning as a group. It's a struggle but, absolutely, we want to run better every week we go out there. Like I said, Daniel's done a really good job. He's aggressive when he can be, but we're all smart and we're all trying to manage our situation. He's not going to go out there and make a move trying for the 20<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> spot or whatever that will put our cars at risk. He'll do what he can to get our best finishes and we need them. As a driver and a crew chief, we all want to be competitive. He's won races, I've won races – not as a crew chief but as a race engineer – and we all want to take this team to the next level, and we're all working in that direction.”

### DANIEL SUÁREZ'S MICHIGAN PERFORMANCE PROFILE

Year	Date	Event	Start	Finish	Status/Laps	Laps Led	Earnings
2019	8/11	Consumers Energy 400	11	5	Running, 200/200	0	N/A
	6/10	FireKeepers Casino 400	9	4	Running, 203/203	1	N/A
2018	8/12	Consumers Energy 400	40	11	Running, 200/200	0	N/A
	6/10	FireKeepers Casino 400	22	30	Running, 132/133	0	N/A
2017	8/13	Pure Michigan 400	16	37	Accident, 138/202	3	N/A
	6/18	FireKeepers Casino 400	20	24	Running, 200/200	0	N/A

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