

Robert Richardson, Jr. reaching two mini-milestones at Nashville

CHINA GROVE, N.C. – Robert Richardson, Jr. and the No. 23 Chevrolet team of R3 Motorsports comes to Nashville Superspeedway as their driver celebrates a mini-milestone in his NASCAR Nationwide Series career; and a personal one.

The native of McKinney, Texas will be making his 50th NNS start on Saturday; then celebrating his 28th birthday on Sunday. The team is still seeking primary and associate marketing partners for single, multiple or full-season partnerships.

The last time Richardson race at the 1.333-concrete oval of Nashville, he came up just a front bumper short of a top-20 finish. This time, Richardson is looking to utilize past experience and a new Chevrolet R07 engine as the perfect pairing for success.

This weekend's race will have Richardson busy on the track with practice, qualifying and the race; at the track with an autograph session and egg coloring contest, and away from the track with a Fan Fest session.

Chassis Info: The team, led by crew chief Steve Plattenberger, is bringing Chassis No. 41 which was last run at California Speedway in February 2010 and October 2009. Since the last race, the car has been tweaked, massaged and thoroughly gone over from nose-to-tail to enhance its balance and performance.

Track Stats: In four previous starts at the oval of Nashville, Richardson, Jr. has a best start of 29th and finish of 21st, both achieved in the June race last year. He's completed 93.3 percent of laps contested.

The first 49: Richardson, Jr. made his first NASCAR Nationwide Series start at Daytona International Speedway in 2007 for Jay Robinson Racing in the No. 28 Chevrolet. His first start for his family-owned R3 Motorsports team took place at Charlotte Motor Speedway in May 2008. And, he's driven for that team ever since.

Happy Birthday, Robert: Although his 28th birthday isn't until Sunday (April 4), it's a safe bet there will be some cake and Elvis music (two of his favorites) on the No. 23 hauler during the weekend. An avid outdoorsman, Richardson plans to celebrate later in the week by going bass fishing.

Color him egg-static: This is no yolk, folks. The annual Easter Egg Decorating Contest is back with Richardson will competing against 11 other NNS drivers and members of the media on Friday to see who can create the best-looking egg. There is no prize money or trophy on the line, just a hoppy winner. Of course, having a degree from SMU in Studio Art should give Richardson somewhat of an artistic advantage.

Where is Richardson? Fans are invited to the Nashville Fan Fest on Thursday, April 1 from 5 to 8 p.m. at the Camping World Grand Ole Opry location. Richardson will join other Nationwide drivers in a Q&A with fans, followed by an autograph session. On Friday, Richardson will take part in an autograph session at Nashville Superspeedway in the Turn 3 Expo Area from 1 to 2 p.m.

Dash 4 Cash is back on track: Nashville will be the first, of four, events in the Nationwide Insurance Dash 4 Cash program. There is a \$25,000 cash bonus awarded to the eligible-race winner of the four Dash 4 Cash races but, should the winner not be eligible, the prize money will roll over to next Dash 4 Cash race. There also is a \$75,000 year-end bonus awarded to the NASCAR Nationwide Series-only driver with the highest number of cumulative points from the four races at the end of the season.

Robert Richardson, Jr. quotes

Kind of a big weekend with your birthday and 50th start: "Yeah, I guess they're both inevitable as long as you keep on living and you keep on racing. The 50 starts could've been more if I ever ran entire seasons, but it's just worked out where I've driven 15 or 16 races per year. As far as turning 28, that's just going to happen as long as I stay on this side of the dirt."

What do you like about racing at Nashville: "Besides all the great country music in the area, I like this track because it's big, fast and it's concrete. Racing on the concrete gives a different dimension because the tires get more grip with the more laps we put down. We're going to have the Truck Series with us this year, so that will add more rubber to the track and really make it have more interesting getting through the turns."

You had a pretty good run here last time: "We were one of only three cars on our lap, which sounds bad. But, when you look at the stats from the June race, there were only six cars on the lead lap, four one lap down and four two laps down. So, we did the best we could and were half a car length from getting a top-20. With our new R07 Chevrolet engine in the car this weekend, and the changes we've been making to our cars, we're confident we can do much better than that this time out."

Okay, what do you want for your birthday: "World peace (laughs). Heck, anything to do with Elvis always works. Anything to do with fishing or hunting are always good, too. But, I'd take a good, solid finish to show what this R3 Motorsports team is truly capable of on the track – that would be a great gift from me to the guys, too."