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Sochi Mayor Promises 'Gimmick-Free' Formula One

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LONDON — The Sochi circuit due to host Russia's first Formula One race in 2014 will encourage overtaking, be ready on time and without "gimmicks," city Mayor Anatoly Pakhomov said.

Pakhomov said, in e-mailed and translated replies to questions, that the track would be ready well ahead of the Winter Olympics in the Black Sea resort that year.

"Of course there are some more specific features that will need to be added upon the completion of the Olympic Games such as run-off areas, catch fencing, etc," he said. "But we foresee the base requirements of the track being completed approximately one year prior to the first race being held."

He said the biggest challenge was the fact that the F1 calendar would not be finalized until late 2013, leaving organizers uncertain about how much time they would have to play with after the Feb. 7-23 Games.

Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin announced a seven-year race deal in October.

They said the first race could be postponed if it affects Winter Olympics preparations, but Pakhomov expressed doubt that would be necessary.

"There is every intention to ensure that the F1 race will go ahead as planned in 2014," Pakhomov said.

"The specific requirements of managing the two events together is being studied carefully at present as the committee working to oversee the successful implementation of the Olympics becomes fully integrated with the committee being set up to orchestrate the F1 race which is still in its formative stage," he said. "However, I don't foresee any slippage of the race into 2015 being necessary."

The mayor said organizers intended to use as many of the Olympic facilities as possible for the grand prix in an unusual legacy of the games.

There would be no need to build two international media centers, and many of the high-profile Olympic structures could be used for corporate hospitality.

"The [grand prix] project has been very closely costed, and the government at all levels is investing just under $200 million in building the track facilities," Pakhomov said.

Andrei Kraynik, a senior executive of Olympic and Grand Prix sponsor MegaFon, said he expected the street circuit built near the Olympic Park to become a fan favorite.

"When we first invited [designer Hermann] Tilke down to see Sochi in 2009, we stressed the importance of ensuring the track design got the balance right," he said by e-mail.

"The track will be a classic track with an emphasis on good overtaking opportunities, no gimmicks," he said. "It will have a mix of high-0speed corners, long straights and hairpins.

"On the one hand you will have the mountains as a backdrop and a city street-track feel at the same time. It will come to be loved by the fans like Montreal, and be challenging for the drivers like Monaco."

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