

# Baltimore tweaks circuit to enhance competition

By Dave Lewandowski

Three alterations to the 2-mile, 12-turn temporary street circuit for the Aug. 31-Sept. 2 Grand Prix of Baltimore will be incorporated into its construction, which was scheduled to begin over-night July 30.

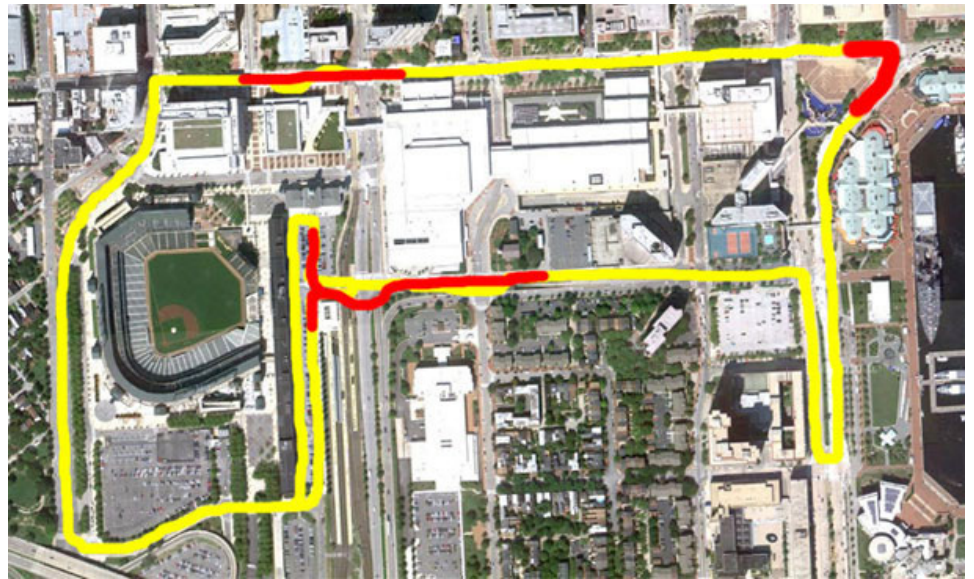
A news conference to position a ceremonial track barrier took place earlier in the day.

The chicane on the Pratt Street main straightaway will be removed, the right-hand Turn 1 will be widened by 4-5 feet and the shape of Turns 5-6 (also pit entrance) will be changed, according to Tony Cotman of NZR Consulting, which is contracted to build the circuit.

"I talked to a number of drivers to get their thoughts about the chicane and the recommendation was with some grinding (to the street surface) it would speed the cars up going into Turn 1 about 7 mph," Cotman said. "Without the chicane I think it will improve the show with a longer run into Turn 1, which will be widened to create a better passing zone and will be a good viewing place."

Two grandstand complexes are located at Turn 1 -- at the intersection of Pratt and Calvert streets.

"Then we looked at Turns 5-6, which was a difficult combination last year, and we'll change the shape of the corner, which may entice some passing. There is terrace seating there that puts the track right under their noses. There are some other subtle changes like the shapes of walls."



Josef Newgarden, who was the Firestone Indy Lights race runner-up in the inaugural event in 2011, said the course alterations will promote additional overtaking and "make for good competition" during the 75-lap race. The three-day Grand Prix drew more than 100,000 spectators to downtown.

"Baltimore was the most physical event last year," said Newgarden, the IZOD IndyCar Series rookie driver of the No. 67 Sarah Fisher Hartman Racing car. "It's really bumpy on half the circuit and really smooth on the other, which made it really difficult to drive the car."

"I loved coming (to Baltimore). It was a phenomenal crowd last year. You don't see that happening very often with a first time event. There were a lot of new fans that embraced IndyCar in the city. It was definitely one of our best events last year, so it should be even better this year."

Improved the flow of pedestrian traffic and dedicated areas for viewing the racing for general admission ticket-holders also has been addressed.

Construction will take place only at night to lessen the impact on traffic and business in the downtown area. The construction schedule also accounts for 24 home games for the Baltimore Orioles at Oriole Park at Camden Yards.

"The majority of (the build) will be done in the final 22 days, leading up to the last week when you're doing the final (street) closings around the circuit," Cotman added.

Tickets for the Grand Prix of Baltimore are on sale at Ticketmaster and <http://www.RaceOnBaltimore.com>.