

Course details take shape for Brasilia Indy 300

By Dave Lewandowski

Maruska Lima says she's looking forward to enjoying the inaugural Brasilia Indy 300 at the Autódromo Internacional Nelson Piquet as a spectator.

For the next four months, though, the president of Terracap – the state- and federally-owned district development agency of Brasilia – will focus on seeing through the initial renovation phase of the facility and revamping of the race course in the capital city to meet INDYCAR requirements.

"I've been working on this project for a year and I see the passion of the people involved and you fall in love with it, too. Watching the (Verizon IndyCar Series) on TV, I am a fan," said Lima, who on Nov. 6 toured the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame Museum and met with INDYCAR officials.

INDYCAR previously sanctioned a Verizon IndyCar Series street race in São Paulo from 2010-13. CART raced in Rio de Janeiro from 1996-2000 on an oval circuit also named for Piquet.

Lima, who was named president of Terracap in July, previously was the director of special works for Novacap (agency that coordinates and manages construction projects), which included coordinating the construction of Brasilia's National Stadium that was utilized for the World Cup this summer. She earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Brasilia, and holds post-graduate degrees in construction engineering and cost engineering.

"An event this big is extremely close to an event such as the World Cup. The Indy race will get the economy moving in the same way. It's not just a race, but all the involvement outside due to the race that occurs. It will enrich the development of the city," she said.

Tony Cotman, president of NZR Consulting, is overseeing the race course project on behalf of the sanctioning body. He'll arrive in the capital next week as initial construction begins.

"The circuit as it is currently is pretty open and fast. It's a driver's track," he said. "We're not going to go in there and change every corner. There are some subtle changes to improve the show and the primary focus for the first year is safety-related alterations and additions to runoff areas, barriers and debris fences.

"Pit lane will move to another straight and there will probably be further modifications in Year 2 to the racetrack to get it exactly the way we want it; to give it some Brazilian character.

"Around the outside of the track are a few grandstands and there is a large berm that is about 20 feet above the circuit, so if you wanted to go there and watch from the grass you'll be able to see most of the track. That's kind of unique."

Veteran Verizon IndyCar Series driver Tony Kanaan, of Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, gave two thumbs up to the project this week while meeting with Lima and Federal District Governor Agnelo Queiroz in Brasilia. Kanaan competed on the circuit in Formula Ford in the 1990s and in a stock car race last year.



"They have many drivers and American fans wondering about Brasilia and I only have good things to say. For me, it's great to start the season running in my country. I can only promise to repay my gratitude with a victory," he said.

New leadership

Rodrigo Rollemberg, 55, is the Governor-elect of the Federal District of Brazil. He defeated incumbent Queiroz and another candidate in the recent general election. Rollemberg, a graduate of the University of Brasilia, takes office in early January.

Dilma Rousseff was re-elected president of Brazil.