

Austin's US grand prix set to be axed from 2012 F1 calendar

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The first Formula One grand prix in the United States for five years is set to be pulled from the 2012 calendar after construction work at the venue ground to a halt, the championship's rights-holder Bernie Ecclestone admitted on Wednesday.

Construction work at the Circuit of the Americas in Austin, Texas, had been ongoing on the understanding that the hosting contract between Ecclestone and race promoter Full Throttle Productions would be passed to the new circuit. However, with work having ceased over doubts about the race contract, and with the State of Texas reportedly refusing to pay funds towards the development in advance of the event, the race looks certain to be cut from the schedule when International Motorsport Federation (FIA) members meet on December 7.

When asked whether the November 2012 race would be called off, Ecclestone told the Press Association: "Yes, it will be, for sure." It emerged on Tuesday that more than 300 people at the venue in Austin had stopped construction work following the dispute. A statement from the Circuit of the Americas had earlier read: "Organisers of Circuit of the Americas, a premier motor sports racing and entertainment venue being developed in Austin, Texas, are suspending further construction of the project until a contract assuring the Formula 1 United States Grand Prix will be held at Circuit of the Americas in 2012 is complete."

The statement added: "The race contract between Formula One and Circuit of the Americas has not been conveyed to Circuit of the Americas per a previously agreed upon timetable. While construction at Circuit of the Americas has progressed as scheduled with over 300 workers at the construction site daily, all work will suspend immediately. The delivery of the Formula One grand prix race contract will allow construction operations to resume."

Bobby Epstein, a founding partner of the track, added: "We have spent tremendous resources preparing for the Formula One and MotoGP championship races, but the failure to deliver race contracts gives us great concern. We believe the United States is vital for the future of Formula One and its teams and sponsors." Indianapolis staged the last F1 race in the United States in 2007.

At the weekend, Tavo Hellmund, the individual behind Full Throttle Productions, said it was "the responsibility of the Circuit of the Americas to make this project happen before Mr Ecclestone's patience runs out". The 2012 race in Austin was due to be followed by a second of two new grands prix in the US, with a New Jersey race scheduled for 2013.

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