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# AutoWeek



## ZOOM

The Monticello Motor Club is talking to F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone about hosting a race 90 minutes from New York.

LAT PHOTOGRAPHIC

By **MAC MORRISON**

Formula One's future in the United States is once again on the front burner, and the latest rumblings suggest that a most unlikely venue could become host to the first U.S. Grand Prix since F1 last raced at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 2007.

According to a letter written by Ari Strauss--president of Monticello Motor Club (MMC) in upstate New York--and leaked Thursday to *AutoWeek*, the country-club-style racing venue is talking to F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone about bringing the Grand Prix circus to the facility at the foot of the Catskill Mountains. Monticello Motor Club is the closest motorsports venue to New York City; it is 90 minutes by car from Manhattan, and there is an international airport 10 minutes away.

According to the letter, Strauss and MMC chairman Bill McMichael met with Ecclestone a few months ago to talk about hosting a Grand Prix, with an eye toward a long-term, 10-year deal. Hermann Tilke, the architect of F1's modern venues, has already visited MMC and apparently determined that the facility is capable of hosting a Grand Prix, although some expansion and modifications would be necessary.

Strauss also said that he and McMichael are working to garner support from local, state and federal politicians and organizations, presumably to secure the financing necessary to make their dream come true.

However, the letter notes that "securing F1 is like winning the Olympics, competition is fierce, and this is not a done deal."

In its current guise, MMC's fast track is 4.1 miles long and includes 22 unique turns and 12 distinct configurations, with more than 1.5 miles of straights. It was designed by driver Brian Redman and Bruce Hawkins, a track architect and engineer. **The Full Letter:**

Dear member,

Within the next day, you may read that Formula One is planning a return to the United States and has their sights on a special location in New York: Monticello Motor Club.

A few months ago, [MMC chairman] Bill McMichael and I met with Bernie Ecclestone, President/CEO of Formula One Management (FOM), and discussed the terms for an exclusive 10-year United States Grand Prix to be hosted at MMC. Shortly thereafter, Hermann Tilke, the chief engineer and circuit designer for F1, spent time at MMC and confirmed that our track and surrounding properties, with some expansion and minor track modifications, is an excellent location for a Grand Prix. Since receiving a letter of understanding from FOM confirming their hope to bring the U.S. Grand Prix to Monticello, Bill and I have continued to secure the backing and support of local, state, and federal politicians and organizations.

If F1 comes to Monticello, our intent is to preserve MMC as, first and foremost, a private country club. Obviously, demand will accelerate as well as the initiation fee for new members. But securing F1 is like winning the Olympics, competition is fierce, and this is not a done deal. While the prospect of F1 at MMC is exciting, we remain focused on our core business: the club and its members.

At this juncture, we are simply honored that F1 is considering our venue as the future, exclusive home for the U.S. Grand Prix. It would transform the region into one of the motorsports capitals of the world, bring thousands of jobs to Sullivan County, inject over \$100M each year into the local economy, and place your private club in the company of famous racing circuits like Monza and Spa.

Warmest regards,

*Ari*

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