

BIC's 'fun layout' gets thumbs-up from riders

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Greater Noida: It has been a decade since the Buddh International Circuit (BIC) hosted its third and final Formula One race in 2013. The BIC track has hardly seen any top-drawer motorsports action after the Indian Grand Prix.

How is it? Is it well-maintained? Is it homologated? Are there bumps on the track? Will it be safe for the riders participating in MotoGP Bharat?

Many such questions that raised apprehensions about the Buddh track had been doing the rounds over the last fortnight. On Thursday, the riders, who are going to race their bikes over the weekend, gave a guarded thumbs-up to the BIC track with many terming it as a "fun layout", their main concern being the walls being too close for comfort at some corners.

Defending champion Francesco Bagnaia, who competes for the

Ducati Lenovo team, said, "I had the chance to do two walking laps. I think the layout is interesting and different to other tracks. It could be great. It will be interesting to ride, considering that in some parts of the track, the run-off areas look a bit short."

"We spoke with the Safety Commission, and they tried to explain everything and have feasible reasons to say it is okay. I think we should be okay," the Italian added.

Pol Espargaro of the Tech3 GasGas Factory Racing team said, "I think we were a bit too hard (on the BIC track) before coming here (in India) and seeing what it was. I think it is much better than we all expected. For me, it's good, it's very good."

"About safety, there are some things that can be improved. But in most tracks in the world, there are places that we (riders) would like to improve. Here, for sure, we need to figure it out, especial-



SMOOTH RIDE: Riders had a field day at the BIC on Thursday

ly racing and crashing, but there is nothing critical."

The Spanish rider added, "I think it can be one of the most fun races of the year. The corners are pretty different going up and down; there is a lot of banking in some corners. It's something different from what we are used to racing."

Brad Binder, the current record holder for fastest speed in MotoGP, is hoping to break his

own record of 366.1 kmph on the BIC track. "I don't really know where the speed trap is, but also it's quite downhill which is cool. Then there's a big kick at the end. So where it goes uphill, there the chances of hitting top speeds might get hit. But anyway, I think it's a really long straight and I firmly believe that records are meant to be broken," the South African said.

Alex Marquez, the younger brother of six-time premier class world champion Marc Marquez, was "fine" with the track.

"It is a nice layout with more up and down than expected. Some walls are a bit close, but better than what we expected. Turn 4 is a little bit critical. There is a 70 or 80-metre run-off after the straight, but the wall is going at an angle, and we never go wide in that direction. It might be tricky, but it is fine. It is on the limit, but with an air fence, it is fine," the Gresini Racing rider said.