



COWBOY COUNTRY

BY ERIC BUTTERMAN

The new Cowboys Stadium
isn't just hosting football;
it's making history.



“As you approach ... an endless wall of glass is the only thing standing between you and the biggest party in Dallas.”

(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) THE PRODIGIOUS EXTERIOR OF COWBOYS STADIUM; LEGIONS OF FANS WATCH THE HUDDLE; ANOTHER COWBOYS VICTORY.



Jerry Jones, owner of the Dallas Cowboys, has never been afraid to do things his way. From his aggressive oil interests to scoring ownership of the Dallas Cowboys franchise, he's not afraid of risk. Still, when he unveiled plans for the new billion-dollar Cowboys Stadium, some thought he'd lost his mind.

These plans meant the biggest NFL stadium ever built, the biggest scoreboard ever and, potentially, the biggest bust ever in sports history. But it has been Dallas locals and visitors who've been busting through the gates to get in. ... and that's just to take the tour. Legions of fans come from far and wide to visit the stadium daily, just to see where the magic happens. Needless to say, it has been a success.

As you approach the stadium, nearly 300 feet of cold, hard steel arches on either side of you, and an endless wall of glass is the only thing standing between you and the biggest party in Dallas. That's just the start for this three million-square-foot mega-complex. Housed inside is the largest high-definition screen in the world, measur-

ing 72 feet-high and 160 feet-wide, with more than 10,000 units of lights. It's so big that footballs have actually struck it during games, causing its own controversy. The stadium has a capacity for 100,000 and houses eight clubs. In other words, even if you don't know the difference between an onside kick and a Hail Mary, if you like a Bloody Mary, you're at the right place.

Dallas Cowboys spokesperson Rich Dalrymple says Jones made it clear that he wanted celebration well before kick-off ever happened. “Two plazas open several hours before the game,” Dalrymple says. “The same places that would normally be devoted to premium parking have become platforms in each end zone dedicated to a party-like atmosphere. There are eight premium clubs available to people who purchased club seats, and there are also

300 suites.” But even if you never entered the stadium, you'd be in the middle of the fun. Pre-game tailgating is allowed on the grassy areas, adding even more life to the festivities. “We want people there to watch any game they want, and we're always coming up with ideas for other entertainment,” he adds.

Though many could argue that the Dallas Cowboys Stadium is a work of art itself, it doesn't stop there. The stadium has an original art collection housed inside. The collection is placed throughout the stadium and consists of pieces like Doug Aitken's “Star,” a stunning work of art involving a neon lit lightbox, and Dave Muller's “Solar Arrangement,” which features the yellow rose of Texas on a wall that stretches a resounding 131 feet. But maybe your idea of the ultimate art is music. U2 and The Jonas Brothers are just some of the bands blowing through the stadium in 2010.

Still, in the end, sports will always be the number one attraction, and the stadium made that clear when it drew more than 100,000 fans to the NBA All-Star Game in February 2010. If you missed it, fear not. How does the 2011 Super Bowl sound? Or how about the 2010 Big 12 Championship?

To Dalrymple, the possibilities for the stadium are unlimited. “We want this to be the center of big-name events in Dallas,” he says. “The city is going to dictate what we do as much as we will.”

Yet with all the hoopla, it seems that Jones still needs to do one more thing ... have the Cowboys win the Super Bowl in their home stadium next year.

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