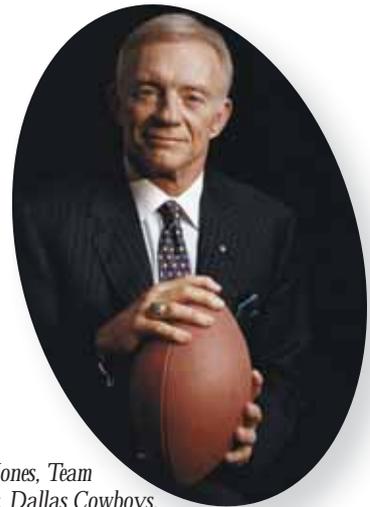


# KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES



*Jerry Jones, Team Owner, Dallas Cowboys.*

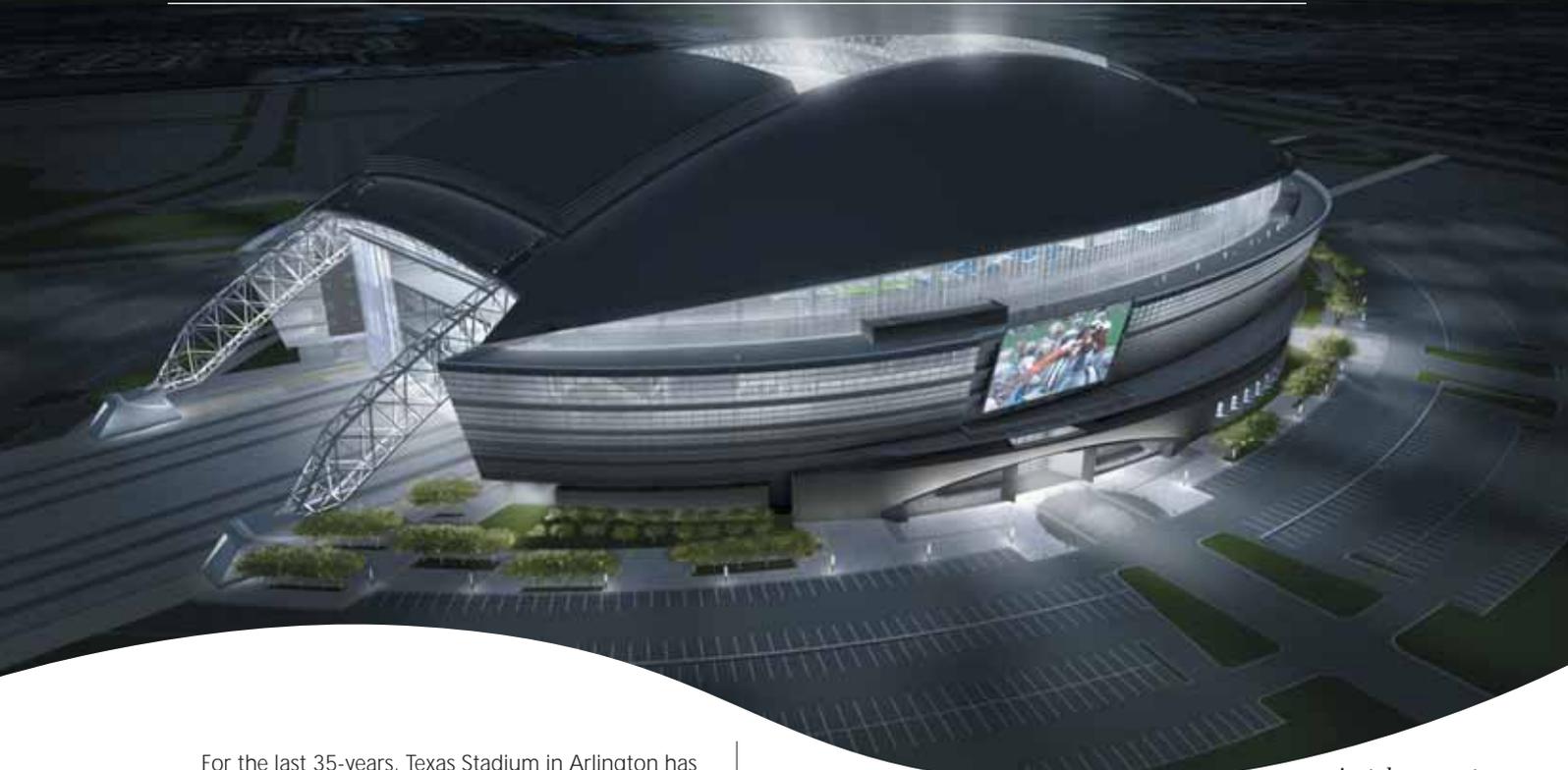
Feature-writer Simon Waterman met up with Dallas Cowboys' team owner, Jerry Jones, to find out more about their innovative new stadium, due to open in 2009.

**T**eam owner, Jerry Jones, and his Dallas Cowboys are embarking on a now familiar journey, one that many National Football League (NFL) teams have taken over recent years and one that will move the franchise forward into the 21st century, that of constructing its own brand new stadium.

The Cowboys are already some way into that voyage and are in the process of building the biggest, highest, most exciting stadium to befit 'America's team'; a stadium that will be the envy of the NFL world and one which will have some other team owners looking over their shoulders and wondering how on earth they can possibly keep up with the Joneses.



*Team Store at Cowboys Stadium.*



*Aerial perspective of the new Dallas Cowboys Stadium from the northeast.*

For the last 35-years, Texas Stadium in Arlington has been 'home' to the Cowboys — a venue renowned for its famous 'hole-in-the-roof', which, as the sport and stadium design progressed, became infamous to TV crews trying desperately to get overhead shots from a 'blimp'. Arlington is just west of the city of Dallas, and is also home to Ameriquest Field, home of the Texas Rangers baseball club.

In order to pay for the new stadium, Arlington voters approved a tax increase in November 2004 to help Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones build the US\$650 million stadium in the North Texas city. Voters approved a measure that would raise the city sales tax by a half-cent, hotel occupancy tax by 2%, and car rental tax by 5%. Work at the stadium site began in May 2006.

When I caught up with Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, and managed to have a conversation with him

during his hectic schedule, I first wanted to know what his thoughts were on the Arlington location of the new stadium and if he had had any other locations in mind before deciding on that site? "I had initially looked very carefully at downtown Dallas. There was a lot of sentiment about making that commitment and having the stadium in the Downtown area, but the proper place for the venue was in the centre of what we call the Dallas Fort Worth Metro-Plex, and that's where it is. Arlington is literally in the centre of where the major population is now and where the growth is going to be. It is near DFW airport, which people generally think of as being the centre of this entire market region."

### Ease of Access

Jerry Jones further added: "The accessibility throughout the area is good (here we travel to ballgames principally by car, not so much by rail, although we do have a good rail system that will be good for us in the future) but I think the location, as it turns out, is really one of the most important positives of this entire project. We will have seventeen major entry points into the stadium for automobiles, compared to at Texas Stadium where we only have four. There's a great network of mature streets in the Arlington area, which allows people a lot of options to get into those seventeen entry points.

"The other thing is that 45% of our fans travel from the west, with 55% coming from the east, so you've got to really balance the approach to the stadium. We made our comparisons against what we have

## Facts & Figures

Name:	Cowboys Stadium
Location:	Arlington, TX, USA
Tenant:	Dallas Cowboys
Capacity:	80,000 (and scaleable up to 100,000), including 15,000 Club Level seats
Surface:	Artificial grass
Construction Began:	May 2006
Opened:	Summer 2009
Cost:	US\$650million
Architect:	HKS, Inc.



*Locker Rooms at  
Cowboys Stadium.*

*The Cowboys' new home will occupy an amazing 2.3million sqft and will be able to boast the largest column-free roof in the world.*

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at Texas Stadium — and while we have a 65,000-capacity at Texas Stadium and 100,000 in our new stadium, we think the accessibility will be much better.”

The hole in the roof aspect became a huge talking point at the time when Texas Stadium was first completed — the hole being seen as a particularly strange feature in an era when most cities were building the more appealing ‘dome’ stadium type. Structural problems were then rumoured to be the reasons behind the ‘unfinished roof’. In fact, the stadium has been a huge success, and served the Cowboys well. The hole-in-the-roof issue finally being put to bed with the philosophy that it was there ‘so that God could watch the Cowboys play’ — a great line that silenced most critics, and enabled the team to move on to greater things.

This ‘God-watch’ theory continues in the design of the new stadium, with the open-roof theme having survived — though the new hole-in-the-roof will be of the retractable variety. The new stadium will in fact include numerous additional retractable features, as will be touched on later in this article.

### Trademark Design

I dared to ask Mr Jones if he ever considered making the stadium a dome, doing away with the idea of a hole in the roof. He was quick to answer and defend the history of the now sacred hole: “No. It was always going to be retractable roof stadium, always. We have a trademark hole in the roof where the Cowboys play now at Texas Stadium, and we wanted to maintain that trademark in the new venue.

“That was the first thing I talked to the designers [HKS, Inc.] about. It was an effort to basically open and close that trademark hole in the roof, but I think we’ve succeeded. Another thing we wanted to do was to

build two giant arches, able to hold the huge media board, which will allow fans watching a game to clearly see the players on the field from any section of the stadium, according to where they are sitting. They will be able to see the players in exaggerated life-size, from the colour of their eyes to the sweat on their brows.”

In effect, the stadium will be an interchangeable dome stadium, and this time the hole will be big enough for aerial TV shots to cover the entire playing field. Certainly God’s view of the Cowboys will be greatly improved, though what He will say when it rains and the roof is closed can only be guessed at — surely a concern for the city of Dallas and the franchise’s chances of reaching a future Super Bowl!

### Extreme Specification

The design specification for the new stadium is worth examining in detail, though bland statistics seldom convey the true enormity of scale and more elaborate comparisons are sometimes better employed. For example, if you were to line up 30,000 vibrant, feisty, athletic (whoops — better stop there!) Cowboy cheerleaders all holding hands, they would only just about be able to encircle the new stadium.

In the USA, new sports facilities are frequently judged according to their size — a most important consideration for many people, especially in Texas! In this instance, the Cowboys’ new home will occupy an amazing 2.3million sqft and will be able to boast the largest column-free room in the world. In addition to its huge acreage, the venue’s interior volume will equate to a mammoth 104million cubic-ft, which will make it the largest enclosed stadium in the NFL.

On the subject of capacity, seating numbers seem to be on the up in North America and, though some ↻



*The Silver Suites will be the nearest to field level out of the three stacked suite levels at Cowboys Stadium and will have direct access to the two Silver Level Clubs, which are both 39,000sqft.*

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recent stadiums have only been in the 70,000-seat range, the new Cowboys' stadium will have an 80,000-capacity to begin with, which can easily be increased to accommodate 100,000 people by utilising standing room, or additional seating in the endzones when concerts, or other such entertainment events, are scheduled.

Two hundred spectator suites will be located within the stadium on five different levels. Close-up viewing will be available from pitch-level suites, which will be situated along the sidelines, as well as along both end-zones, but there will also be 'Hall of Fame' level suites, a mere twenty rows from the field, making them the closest anywhere in the NFL.

### Multi-Talented

I asked Mr Jones for his thoughts on staging different events at the stadium and what design elements allow the facility to be so multi-faceted. He advised as follows: "One of the principle things is the retractable roof, along with the air conditioning and the retractable doors in the endzones — these are each 130ft high and almost 200ft long — that allow us to keep the elements out and more for the benefit of other events. We will actually play ten [Dallas Cowboys] football games per year at the new stadium but we think we will also host up to ten major college games too.

"This is a hotbed for football, especially with all the college interest, you have such a good source for talent here. There is a tremendous market here and we see the potential of doubling our games as far as football is concerned. Right now, we host almost forty high school football games a year and five of those are attended by over 50,000 people.

"In addition to that, we recognise the possibilities for us to host NBA basketball games, especially for big

events such as the NBA finals, and certainly for other sports. The stadium is also suitable for large gatherings of people, such as revivals, religious services and national political conventions. North Texas does not have a venue capable of seating 100,000 people, whereas we will have over 2.5million square feet at our disposal — that's going to be quite a facility for this part of the world, it will be quite an attraction."

### Retractable Phenomena

The stadium's domed roof will boast an incredible area of 660,800sqft, making it the largest domed structure anywhere in the world. When retracted, the roof will have an aperture measuring 256ft wide by 410ft long, and the two huge retractable panels are both 63,000sqft in size. When in place, the roof will be supported by two arches that will each measure 35ft deep by 15ft wide, and span some 1,290ft.

Sticking with this theme, the stadium will also boast two retractable glass doors at each end of the stadium. They will each measure 120ft high by 180ft wide, and should soon be confirmed as the largest retractable doors in the world — yet they will only take eighteen minutes to open or close. Manufactured in transparent glass, they will provide enhanced views from both the interior and exterior.

To convey just how enormous this whole project is requires another wild comparison to be made. To merely say that this will be the largest domed structure in the whole world does not do it justice. Far better to state that you could fit the entire American Airlines Center (located in Dallas and home to both the Dallas Stars ice hockey team and the Dallas Mavericks basketball team) into the new stadium at field level.

Similarly, the arches that are to support the stadium roof will be more than twice the length of the famous 



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Gateway Arch landmark in St. Louis — as they will each span the entire 1,290ft length of the stadium. Indeed, the roof will be the longest clear-span structure in the world, taking the record away from the infamous arch at the new Wembley Stadium in England. And before anyone asks (and it seems many are tempted), it is not yet clear if the structure will be visible from outer space, like the Great Wall of China or the Egyptian Pyramids.

### Visual Technology

Recent technological advances in stadium audiovisual (AV) display systems have resulted in spectators being able to enjoy some staggering effects. Dallas will be no exception and no expense will be spared as the Cowboys add a unique, centre-hung video display screen console to the stadium. This will be suspended in mid-air, about 110ft above the field of play, and be supported by the aforementioned mammoth steel arches.

This may not sound like too much of an innovation, but suffice to say that two of the video screens will stretch for 60yards in between the twenty yard lines, and will be an impressive 50ft high — and all of this will be 110ft off the ground! In fact, spectators in the upper elevated seating areas will probably watch the screens to get better views of all the action up close. This should create a premium on the value of the upper seating and could make the game more exciting — though it could also be seen as defeating the object of actually going to a live game in the first place!

Spectators sitting at the ends of the stadium will not be excluded from this high-tech video experience either, as two 48ft wide display boards will enhance their viewing experience. In total there will be eight hi-tech video boards located around the new venue.



*Main picture & right: Cowboys Stadium will have the trademark 'hole' in its roof — courtesy of a retractable roof.*



Another feature increasingly prevalent in new stadium designs today, whether intended for football, basketball or ice hockey, is the use of 360° matrix boards located on the interior seating façade. These boards activate the interior bowl and unify the seating decks graphically. They can effectively offer advertisers 360° exposure during a game, whilst the high-quality resolution of the boards will add value to each seating deck, as they will additionally be used to update spectators with all the latest scores and stats.

### External Entertainment

Pre-game entertainment has now become big business for the NFL and though 'tailgate partying' has a long tradition, today's clubs are reaping a financial windfall from this phenomenon. Just imagine the vast sums of money that the multitude of fans turning up hours ahead of games are willing to spend on refreshments and other forms of entertainment.

To this end, two huge 'media walls' will greet visitors as they approach the venue from the north and south entrances. Each wall will be capable of displaying an array of visual formats, including video and fixed imagery, or will be used as a projection screen for still images. They will be large enough to be seen from nearby roads leading to the parking areas and the so-called 'tailgaters' will have the luxury of both pre-game and post-game broadcast-quality images for their enjoyment.

Additionally, there will be endzone plazas at either end of the new facility. These will serve as gathering and entertainment areas, as well providing the large entrance points necessary for spectators to enter the stadium. Team sponsorship platforms for corporate partners and secured VIP tent areas will also be located there, and the endzones will allow interactive

experiences for visitors to music concerts and other types of entertainment.

It is here that the huge glass doors previously mentioned will be installed to provide spectators with breathtaking views leading up to the venue and, once opened, to enable spectators to then enjoy the entertainment inside.

### Interior Delights

What self-respecting stadium can now be complete without the obligatory 'Hall of Fame'? In Dallas it will be interactive and hands-on for the Cowboys fans. Adjacent to it there will also be a large pro-shop and merchandising commercials will be presented on the two exterior media walls. Two additional retail stores will be located in the main concourse and visitors will find smaller merchandising establishments elsewhere in the facility.

So, the Cowboys are well on the way to having a new home and their supporters are hoping that the franchise is also on the verge of a new era of success. The so far un-named stadium is scheduled to open in 2009 and the future already looks bright, with the club having announced its intention to host the 2011 Super Bowl!

I couldn't forgive myself if I didn't give Jerry Jones the last word. I duly gave him a free reign to express just what this new stadium means to the Cowboys organisation. He replied as follows: "It will be the largest stadium ever built square foot wise and it will have a life of its own. It will also incorporate, as I mentioned, a significant past image/trademark in the form of the 'hole'.

"Perception is such a big thing. By our very nature we want our players and our games to be larger than life in terms of competitiveness and entertainment value, and this stadium will reflect just that, both through its design and how it will appear. We've invested a lot of money and gone to a great deal of effort to accomplish that." ★