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Home > Sports > Dallas Cowboys > Cowboys Stadium > A venue for the ages

A VENUE FOR THE AGES

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BY RAY BUCK

Arriving at the grand structure for the first time, Bob Lilly peered through his car windshield and said to himself: "Gosh. Looks like half-automobile, half-spaceship."

Or a playpen for Transformers characters to duke it out.

Or a large computer mouse...on steroids.

No matter, Lilly blinked in disbelief, because even though he had read about it, heard about it, even seen pictures of it, he hadn't grasped the full effect until now.

He and his wife, Ann, had driven from their Sun City home, just outside Austin, to Cowboys Stadium for a grand-opening, Jerry Jones-style gala in late May.

As a native Texan raised in Throckmorton/schooled at TCU, Lilly felt comfortable that he was familiar with North Texas and most of the streets of Arlington.

But now, he felt he had made a wrong turn somewhere.

"Dubai," said Mr. Cowboy, laughing at his own observation. "This thing looks like it would fit in Dubai. Isn't it the place that has all that wealth?"

As the world years

In excess of 7.7-million man hours have gone into the building of the new Cowboys Stadium in Arlington. That's a lot of sweat.

It measures roughly 3 million square feet. That's a lot to furnish.

Investment costs have eclipsed the \$1.15 billion mark and are nearing \$1.2 billion, according to the mayor of Arlington who stuck his neck out there, too.

But what began 40 months ago as a 50-foot hole in the ground in the spring of 2006 — assigned an "Emporis Building ID 236448" number — has become the standard by which the rest of world now measures its sports palaces.

It cost more than twice as much as Houston's Reliant Stadium, built earlier this decade, and provides double the square footage of the new Yankee Stadium, which opened in April.

But the real pressure was living up to itself.

The Cowboys, worth \$1.6 billion according to Forbes Magazine, are the second-most valuable sports franchise in the world, behind only Manchester United (\$1.8 billion).

"The pressure was in creating a venue that matched the worldwide identity and power of the Dallas Cowboys brand," said Mark Williams, associate principal architect of Dallas-based HKS Inc.

Williams sees it as a structure that will stand well into the 2050s, maybe longer, and attract visitors from all over the globe.

"It's truly iconic," Williams said of Cowboys Stadium. "People, literally from all over the world, will want to come and see it, whether they know what to do on fourth-and-long or not."

That's one thing the city of Arlington didn't do. It didn't punt.

The vision

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones, Arlington mayor Robert Cluck and the Arlington City Council were the dreamers behind this project. They also were the first to take action.

Cluck knew what he wanted. He also knew what Jones wanted.



View photos

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Oct 11 - at Kansas City, 1:00 PM
Oct 18 - Open
Oct 25 - vs. Atlanta, 4:15 PM
Nov 1 - vs. Seattle, 1:00 PM
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