

I'm Going to Jerry World!

From celebrities to pole dancers, the new Dallas Cowboys stadium has a bit of everything



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There are certainly different approaches to an economic downturn. One approach, obviously, is to tighten the belt and look for ways to contain costs. The other extreme is to go so far over the top that even in challenging times the world will not only pay attention but will pay to take a look at your creation. Consider this second option the “Field of Dreams”

option. You take a farm on the verge of bankruptcy and create a baseball field—in the words of Kevin Costner’s character, you create something “totally illogical.”

Not that there was ever any doubt which option Jerry Jones would choose, but I can confirm that with the new Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, Texas—aka “Jerry World”—he has done the latter. My experience at the first regular-season game at Jerry World, which featured an NFL-record 105,000 fans, confirmed it as simply the biggest, baddest stadium in the country. Jones’ \$1.2 billion edifice may have established him as both the P.T. Barnum and the Ramses the Great of his time. He sought to build the greatest showplace on earth while at the same time creating a monument to himself in which he may someday request to be entombed.

On this night it was not only the focus of the American football world but also the epicenter of pop culture. I had the good fortune to be in one of the field-level suites, into each of which Jerry Jones deposited a bottle of Dom Perignon with a personal note. I did have one question going in: With all the celebrities and riffraff on the sideline, how is it possible to see the field from a field-level suite? Indeed I experienced a wall of glitterati before the game as various Cowboys legends, all of whom would be enshrined in the new ring of honor, strolled by. At one point, I was speaking to the conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and turned to grab a drink off the ledge, almost elbowing Rudy Giuliani in the process as he took his obligatory lap around Jerry World. Women strolled by in outfits that seemed a little excessive for a football stadium. This was all well and good, but how was I going to see the game once it started?

The answer lies in the fact that for each of the field-level suites a certain number of seats are allocated in the

first level above the field, a quick jump up a flight of stairs that could be accomplished between plays. Having gone up a level to get a better vantage point from those seats, I decided to count the number of seating levels in Jerry World. I realized then that Jones has not only pulled a Field of Dreams, a P.T. Barnum and a Ramses the Great, he has done a Spinal Tap: The stadium goes to 11 levels of seating. However, when I tried to take a lap around the stadium to see the various vantage points, I couldn’t. Jones has pulled a Titanic as well (and here I was on its maiden voyage!). Various sections of the stadium are segregated, meaning you cannot get in, or even go through, without the appropriate ticket.

Over the field, the giant Jerry Vision video screen alternated between quick replays and 20 seconds of a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader now enlarged to 60 yards long. As the sun went down, I looked toward the end zone doors on the west side and I saw a staggering sight. The architectural design at that end of the stadium fea-

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tures four poles with bird’s-nest structures. On them were what the Dallas Cowboys are calling “rhythm dancers,” and as they were silhouetted against the western sky it looked like the backdrop of a 1960s variety show. But there was still something unsettling, something I had not quite been

able to process about it, and so I looked again. It then dawned on me what this was. My God, Jerry Jones has built a \$1.2 billion stadium complete with pole dancers!

The scenes shown on the video screen during the pregame celebration were also interesting—scenes from outside the stadium so that you could get a sense of the buzz that was going on in the tailgating areas, scenes from the sidelines as Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin chatted together, scenes from NFL games that were wrapping up in other venues. But when an image of Jerry Jones appeared on the screen, 105,000 of his closest friends broke out in appreciative applause for his penchant for excess. ■

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