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ARLINGTON



Photos by TOM FOX/Staff Photographer

Crews have spent years planning the signs at Cowboys Stadium in Arlington. Even now, the signs are still being adjusted. This one was moved into the main concourse in August.

A little direction for Cowboys fans

Sign planning ensures stadiumgoers get where they're going

By JEFF MOSIER

Staff Writer

jmosier@dallasnews.com



ARLINGTON — Cowboys Stadium is packed to its arches with design elements that make fans gawk in amazement.

John Lutz's contributions, however, blend into the surroundings when they're done right and tend to grab visitors' attention only when they get lost.

Lutz, a principal at Selbert Perkins Design, was part of a team that created the look of the signs at the stadium and mapped where all 3,600 of them go — from concourse signs as long as a car to the small female/male symbols on restroom doors.

"Signage is something that people really only notice when it's not working," Lutz said.

With thousands of signs directing tens of thousands of people, there will be plenty of opportunities to test the

INSIDE:
Venue has secrets ahead of opener. 15B



CHECK OUT the Cowboys Stadium blog to join the conversation about the new

stadium.dallasnews.com/stadiumblog

A sign directs people to the upper levels from the main end zone plaza. In the main concourses, the signs resemble those at an airport terminal.

See **SIGN** Page 15B

Venue still has secrets ahead of opener

Regular-season debut to answer questions on star, Ring of Honor

By JEFF MOSIER
Staff Writer
jmosier@ds12news.com

For the Dallas Cowboys, it's been a year filled with milestones, unveilings and ceremonies surrounding their new stadium.

But they've been holding back on their fans. Cowboys officials wanted to reserve some surprises for the first regular-season game in their new \$1.15 billion stadium in Arlington.

Brett Daniels, a team spokesman, was secretive about many details, but he did give a few hints about what fans might see in a week.

"We want to have a little bit of a surprise," Daniels said.

One of the biggest questions — aside from how the Cowboys will do this year — is where is the star? The team's famous symbol has been missing from the turf for its two preseason games in Arlington.

It will be there, though, when the team takes the field next Sunday against the New York Giants. Daniels, however, was particularly tight-lipped about that. He would not say whether it would be covered up when fans arrived Sunday or how it would be presented.

Workers have recently been putting up the Ring of Honor around the seating bowl at the new stadium. But it's been covered to keep visitors, employees and fans taking tours from getting a sneak peek.

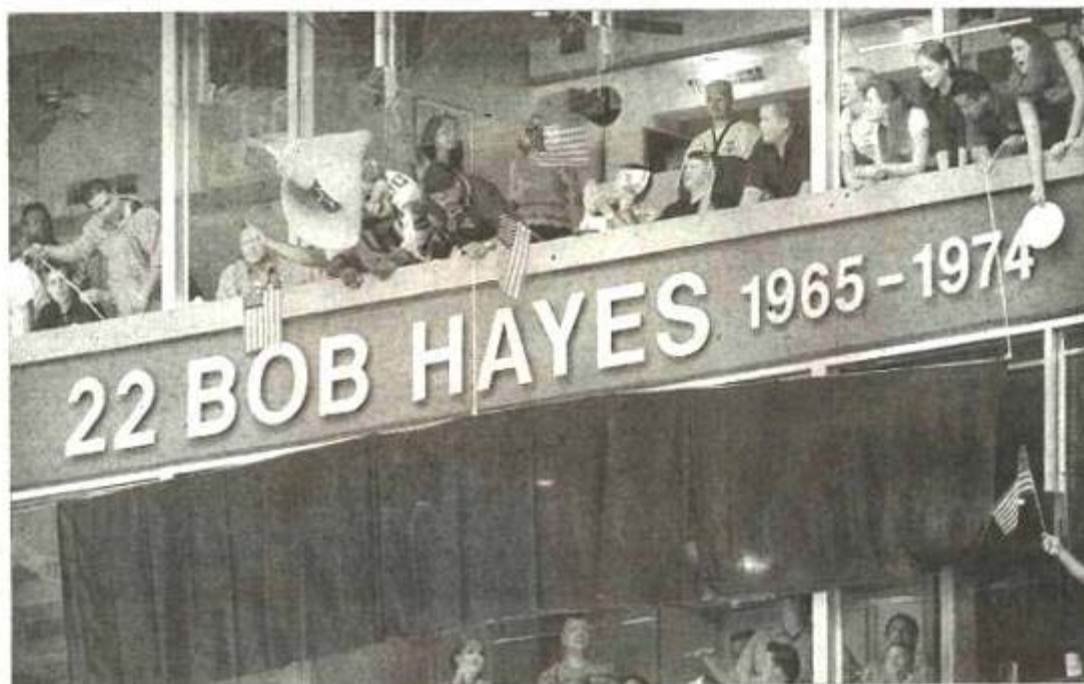
By late last week, the Ring of Honor was still being installed, Daniels said. He said it hadn't been decided whether it would be unveiled before the game or at halftime.

"That'll be part of the surprise of opening night," he said.

The statue of Tom Landry, which stood at Texas Stadium since 2001, will be installed by late this week at Cowboys Stadium. Daniels said there are no plans to hold a ceremony for the installation because they were simply moving the statue.

It will be in place before that first game and will be at Gate A, close to the entrance of the team's pro shop. That will put the Landry statue at one of the busy spots at the stadium. Daniels said that covered most of the big surprises for that debut game.

But if there were others, it wasn't clear whether he would tip his hat.



FILE 2001/Staff photo

A cherished part of Texas Stadium, the Ring of Honor was recently being put up at the new stadium. It has been covered to prevent any early peeks, and its unveiling next Sunday is a secret. "That'll be part of the surprise of opening night," Cowboys spokesman Brett Daniels says.



FILE 2002/Staff photo

The star at the center of the field was missing in the two preseason games at Cowboys Stadium. It will be there next Sunday, but how and when it will be presented is being kept secret.



FILE 2001/Staff photo

Alicia Landry is shown with a statue of her late husband, Tom, the longtime Cowboys coach. The statue will be installed in the stadium this week.

Sign planning helps stadium visitors get where they're going

Continued from Page 1B

years of work put into the sign master plan for the Cowboys' \$1.15-billion stadium.

Robin Perkins, a Los Angeles-based partner in Seibert Perkins, said the public is probably unaware of the long hours and extensive analysis that goes into a sign program — particularly one this large.

"They just think that it appears," Perkins said.

Work began in early 2007, just a few months after excavation of the seating bowl was completed and construction started. Even now, the signs are still being tweaked.

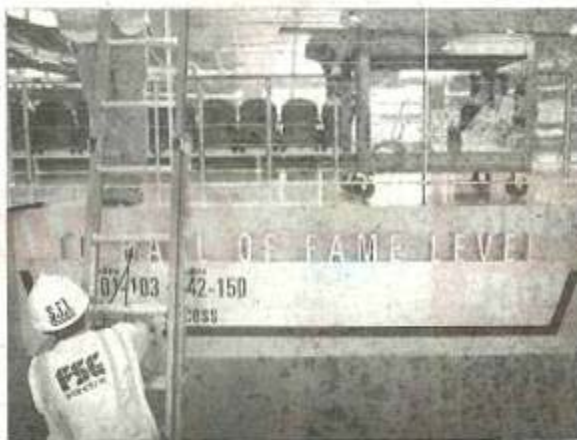
In the last couple of weeks, workers were adding and subtracting information from signs and adjusting some of their locations based on how they worked for the early concerts and sporting events.

"It's a living, breathing project for at least the first year," said Brett Daniels, a Cowboys spokesman.

But functionality is just one element of a stadium that Cowboys owner Jerry Jones has said he hopes will be the second-most recognizable building in the country behind the White House.

"We bring that pragmatic approach to getting people where they need to go," Perkins said, "and then we layer it with an artful approach to telling the story of our client's brand."

Seibert Perkins has worked



TOM FOX/Staff Photographer

Christian Martinez finishes placing a sign pointing to the Hall of Fame Level at the stadium. In the past couple of weeks, workers have been adding and subtracting information from signs and adjusting their locations based on how they worked for events the stadium has already hosted.

on signage at theme parks and created the 100-foot tall lighted glass pylons at the entrance to Los Angeles International Airport.

Unifying elements

The most obvious example is in the Cowboys Stadium parking lots. Many lots are labeled with the numbers and names of former Cowboys players who have been inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But the planning involved more than just slapping photos on light poles, Lutz said.

He said the pictures were reproduced in a halftone style — a collection of dots of differ-

ent sizes — to mimic photos from old newspapers. The images also fade a little at some angles to give the impression that fans are peering into the team's past, Lutz said.

Perkins said the signs tie together the team and the building.

"There's a heroic sense to the architecture of the building," she said, and that extends to the poses on the parking signs.

There were even discussions about who goes where. The decision was made that the Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman lots should go near the main stadium entrance. The Tom Landry lot was placed near Collins Street and Randol

Mill Road, one of the area's busiest intersections.

Perkins said every project is unique, but there are common principles that link many of their projects.

The sign design at the stadium and most everywhere else takes a little of its philosophy from the intelligence community. Fans get their information on a need-to-know basis, Perkins said that if there are more than three bits of information on a sign, people will often forget some details before they can use it.

"Less is more," Perkins said, quoting the motto of minimalist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

Another problem with

packing too much information into a single sign is that it encourages pedestrians to stop and read everything. In the middle of a corridor designed to keep a river of people flowing, stopping to read 10 lines of text would cause congestion.

Designers give fans just enough information to get to the next sign, which will steer them to their section, their aisle and their seats.

Signs also have to fit in with the scale of their surroundings.

"If it's too big, it's going to look clumsy," Perkins said. "And if it's too small, it's not going to function."

Lutz said sign designers know from research that 6-inch-tall letters will make a sign visible for about 140 feet for someone with 20/20 vision. If the designers switched from simpler fonts to more elaborate ones, the visibility of the signs would be greatly reduced.

'Subtle variances'

Designers also generally place large directional signs — some as big as 18 feet long in Cowboys Stadium — overhead in the main concourses. In large crowded spaces, Lutz said, overhead signs are the best ways to reach people.

He said that much of the signage in the concourse resembles what might be seen in an airport terminal or train station. Transit facilities have a

similar function of moving large crowds as efficiently as possible.

Lutz said that in the suite and club areas, the signs are more likely to resemble those in a luxury hotel. In those areas, few of the overhead signs are used since they would interfere with the pricy light fixtures and custom ceiling designs. The colors in the club areas are also more muted and use blacks to match some of the granite tabletops.

"These are all pretty subtle variances in the sign program, but they really begin to communicate about the experience at each of these levels," Perkins said. "You have the main concourse, which is really about the game, and then these other levels, which really describes another level of experience. ... These are subtle references, but people pick them up."

Perkins said the signs are meant to complement the stadium architecture. They use the same color scheme as the Cowboys and the interior design. Even the angled edges of the signs mirror the angled glass walls on the sides of the stadium.

Most of all, the signs have to do the deceptively complex job of moving 80,000-plus people around a new environment, Perkins said.

"If we don't hear any complaints, we've done our jobs," Perkins said. "We know we're not the show here."