

CONSTRUCTION

## Austin firm gets Cowboys turf deal

### Hellas Construction wins deal to provide 'roll-up' turf system at Arlington venue.

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An Austin company will roll out the green carpet at the Dallas Cowboys' new state-of-the-art stadium.

Sports surfacing contractor Hellas Construction Inc. won the contract to provide its new removable "roll-up" turf system to the \$1 billion Cowboys Stadium slated to open in Arlington next year.

The Cowboys have used Hellas turf products at Texas Stadium and the team's Valley Ranch training facility. The new field, however, will mark a departure with its advanced synthetic turf and roll-up technology, Hellas said.

"We build football fields, and we are based in Texas, and we got the contract to build the most spectacular field in the world," said Reed Seaton, founder and CEO of Hellas, which has 300 employees in northwest Austin and has \$60 million in revenues.

Neither Seaton nor an executive for the new stadium elaborated on the value of the deal other than to say it was one small piece of the project.

The contract makes the Cowboys the first NFL team to use the new turf technology and is the most high-profile deal to date for the 4-year-old Austin firm.

In addition to Cowboys games, the venue is slated to host the Big 12 football championship games in the 2009 and 2010 seasons, the Cotton Bowl beginning in 2010 and the 2011 Super Bowl.

Essentially, the deal entails the purchase of three fields: an NFL field, a college football field and a blank field that can be painted for other events, such as soccer or lacrosse games. The trademarked "Matrix" field can be removed in 12 hours, and installed in 18 hours, Seaton said.

In 2010, the venue will host the NBA All-Star Game, for which the field will be rolled up and stored.

The field can be rolled up in strips — about 41 rolls for all three fields — with special equipment from the sidelines and stored under staging areas at field level, said Jack Hill, an executive for Blue Star

Development and the new stadium's general manager.

"What we liked about it was ... the fact that the field was removable and you could roll it up and store it," he said.

Hill said the new field will debut in the 2009 season, but he didn't have an exact date.

The new Cowboys stadium will have plenty of firsts at the start of its 2009 season. It will showcase the first center-hung high-definition video scoreboard and end zone plazas with retractable doors.

The new field will get plenty of foot traffic. Besides hosting 10 2009 pre- and regular season Cowboy games, the venue will host an annual game between Texas A&M University and University of Arkansas as well as a roster of high school football games, which currently total 25 to 35 games a season at Texas Stadium.

The "Matrix" field has been used at the high school and college level already, including Northern Arizona University's J. Lawrence Walkup Skydome and several Texas high school stadiums, Seaton said. He said Hellas has been refining the system for the past several years.

Seaton has been in Austin since the early 1980s. He was founder and president of Leander-based SRI Sports Inc., which sold Astroturf. By 2003, the firm, which once posted \$220 million in revenues, ran into financial troubles and filed for bankruptcy.

Seaton, however, said he saw a new future for the industry, even after SRI's troubles.

"Our business is greater; we have had phenomenal success," Seaton said.

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