How to Build a
STADIUM IN NINE MONTHS

Records Fell Steadily When Crews Swung
Into Action on 70,000-Seat Houston Arena

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I T WAS more or less inevitable in magical Houston that when they finally got around to building a new stadium it would be a "lollapalooza." But even the cynics from Dallas, New Orleans and points north, east and west weren't prepared for what actually happened.

For last fall the big bowl of concrete was just a gleam in the eyes of a few officials at Rice Institute. This fall-on September 30, to be exact— it was opened with fanfare before a near capacity crowd which jammed its 70,000 seats.

Starting on January 3, 1950, the energy and drive of Houston had built one of the nation's largest stadiums in less than nine months. And that's a world's record for a project of such mammoth proportions that they'll be shooting at for a long time.

How do you build a major stadium in nine months? That goes back quite a way before the final decision to go ahead was made. For five years prior to the groundbreaking, architects and trustees for Rice had visited practically every major stadium in the country. They selected what they considered the best features of all of them, added a some of their own ideas. Then last November Brown & Root took the contract for construction on a cost-plus-nothing basis. Materials suppliers jumped in on the same no-profit footing.

The two top hands at Brown & Root assigned to the task of finishing the giant in time for the opening game against Santa Clara this fall were C. J. Bolls and Frank C. Kuich. Bolls, who had overall charge of the task, and Kuich, as project superintendent, got their heads together, and on January 3 their workmen broke ground.

Two 10-hour shifts were necessary, they figured, even though they had as many as 550 men on the job at times. Sometimes, even then, many men worked as many as 70 hours a week to get the job done.

Night crews worked under light furnished by portable generating units. Mountains of dirt were moved by dozens of bulldozers. Concrete—some 22,000 cubic yards of it—reached spots where it was needed on time. Steel reinforcing bars were there when needed. Often they were just one jump ahead of the work, but they saw to it that there was no delay. For they knew there couldn't be.

Gradually the giant began to take form as concrete and steel fused together. Ground surrounding the stadium was leveled as preparations were made for the 10,000-car parking area.

Sixteen giant light towers, eight on each side of the stadium, were put up practically just before game time. Meanwhile, the field itself, nearly 9 feet below ground level, was getting its share of attention. An elaborate drainage system had been installed capable of withstanding as much as 10 inches of rain without flooding. Bermuda grass sprouted on the playing field, carefully nurtured by waterers since its planting last June. Things began to shape up.

Passersby, and thousands who had viewed the work as it progressed from special stands erected on the Rice Boulevard side for that purpose, saw the section seats being put into place. To many of them it had seemed for months that the fans might have to sit on concrete for the first game. But officials knew what they were doing. Seats were being installed almost up to game time. A little workmen who had 600 seats would get to the northeast side if put in place at night.

A 10,000-car parking lot in the making, as base and surface are prepared.