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P.O. Box 1676  
Frisco, Texas 75034  
Phone: 972.335.1181  
Toll Free: 877.781.7067  
Fax: 214.722.2313

E-mail: [info@friscostyle.com](mailto:info@friscostyle.com)  
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Opening day at Pizza Hut Park

photo by David Snell, Starlight Flight

## Veintidós hombres, cuatro funcionarios y una pelota... (22 Men, 4 Civil Servants, and 1 Ball...)

By Chris Johnson

FOR THOSE WHO HAVEN'T BEEN to a professional soccer game, this summarizes what you'd expect to see at the new Pizza Hut Park on game night--twenty-two men, four officials and a ball. However, FC Dallas brought a whole lot more to Frisco.

On Saturday, August 6 at 7:30pm FC Dallas brought their "game" to Frisco—and what a game it was! In spite of construction challenges, both at the stadium and the roads around the facility, 16,750 fans enjoyed a great evening of soccer and fanfare along with a very broad sense of community.

Preceded by an impressive flyover of jets from the local joint reserve naval base, the contest was both impressive and enjoyable. Beginning with the

opening kick, players from both FC Dallas and the MetroStars dazzled fans with speed, agility, ball control and creativity. Scoring opportunities magically materialized — from the coordinated imaginations of the players to reality in three quick touches. While any other game ending in a 2-2 tie would run the risk of being labeled "boring" or "disappointing," fans had to be pleased with the level of play and entertainment value.

But the evening offered more than the game itself. Arriving at Pizza Hut Park, it didn't take long to realize something different was about to take place — something very different for Frisco. When Bankston Ford moved from Preston Rd to Hwy 121 and

Dallas Parkway, everyone noticed the significant change to fabulous facilities and larger lots with greater inventory. Stonebriar Centre's opening brought new attention to the area. The megamall and the shops of Frisco Bridges amply host shoppers from all over the area. When the Dr Pepper/7Up Ballpark opened and the Frisco RoughRiders took the field, Frisco and the surrounding area was thrilled with the family atmosphere and the play of these "boys of summer." The Dr Pepper StarCenter opened and we quickly embraced the passion and electric pace of the Texas Tornado. Frisco, north Plano, McKinney, Prosper, Little Elm, The Colony and Celina — we all see our friends and neighbors at

these new venues and continue to love every minute of it.

But, the opening of Pizza Hut Park was different. Did you notice? Did you feel it?

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“Public address announcements could be heard in both English and Spanish – by necessity... It was fabulous.”

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Perhaps it was due to the sheer size of the event or the fact that soccer is the one sport beloved by the entire world. Regardless, in what seemed like one fell swoop, Frisco had become a magnet drawing fans from south of Dallas to north of Sherman, from Greenville to Flower Mound. Suddenly, the DFW metroplex had been turned inside out – geographically. We fans in Frisco didn’t need the Dallas North Tollway, Central Expressway, I-35 or Hwy 121 – Dallasites did. It seemed as though we never left home while many other people had to leave their homes and come to Frisco – for a change. For those of us who have had to account for back-ups at tollbooths or the “Bermuda triangle” that is Central Expressway and LBJ when going to

concerts and sporting events, this was both exhilarating and liberating.

Since other venues have opened, we’ve become accustomed to seeing our friends and neighbors enjoying these events along with us. However, Pizza Hut Park seemed to be the “final straw” in attracting the DFW metroplex—and beyond, to Frisco. The diversity among the crowd was remarkable and never-before seen at a Frisco venue. Yes, our friends and neighbors were there, but so were everyone else’s friends and neighbors. At what other event in Frisco have you seen people waving large national flags to cheer on their favorite player and promote their cultural background? And, where else in Frisco have you heard public address announcements in both English and Spanish – by necessity. This gave the experience a broader, more international ambiance. It was fabulous.

Thank you Frisco RoughRiders, for bringing baseball to our town. We don’t miss the drives to Arlington. Thank you Texas Tornado for bringing high-energy hockey – and two successive championships – to Frisco. We don’t miss the drive to Dallas. Clearly one goal of the City of Frisco is a reality – Frisco has become a destination. Thank you Hunt Sports Group, the City of Frisco, the Frisco ISD and Collin County!

Frisco ha llegado a ser un destino.

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*Chris Johnson is publisher of Frisco STYLE Magazine.*

