

# Something was missing in

## Impressions on the 39th Cotton Bowl

By Rick Starr



Photo by Eric Felack

*Fran Fisher led a pep rally that could be heard beyond the mezzanine*

DALLAS—All of downtown Dallas reflects on the Solarban glass walls of the First International Building, a shimmering tower that even rises above the Bank of Texas across the street. The reflections are distorted in places by the corners of the building and the moldings of the windows.

It was sometime late Tuesday afternoon when the alcohol began to take hold and the reflection of the Holiday Inn lost its distortion. To the left, beyond the steam and smoke of a dozen blocks of low industrial buildings stood the twin towers of the Fairmont Hotel, Penn State's team headquarters and the closest thing in Dallas to a Miami Beach palace.

That afternoon the chandeliered, red velvet luxury of the Fairmont lobby was vibrating as the Nittany Lion Fight Song began to warm up the Penn State Cotton Bowl pep rally. Hundreds of Lion fans who had been gathering around post card racks and steakhouses for five days came souped up and ready to roar, enough to outnumber the kids hocking game programs and the cash bartenders working around the edges of the Grand Ballroom.

The crowds in Dallas were good. They had better material than comedian David Frye, who was fencing with the audience nightly in the Fairmont's Venetian Room. And they showed such bar room enthusiasm at the Monday night performance of Godspell that by the end some couldn't tell Jesus from Judas Iscariot. By the time the pep rally got rolling, the

crowd was primed.

In one corner of the ballroom a red vested bartender, a student at the University of Texas, was laughing. "I recognize some of those faces," he said, pointing to the line of Penn State football players on the stage. "I've seen some of them out on the town. Real late. Like till around 3 a.m."

Onstage, John Cappelletti and the crowd were exchanging good natured barbs. "Nice game Sunday," a man shouted, referring to the Los Angeles Rams' loss to the Minnesota Vikings. "Why don't you come and play for the Eagles!" another guy yelled. "You'll have to talk to the management," Cappelletti said to loud approval.

Then it was Lion coach Joe Paterno's turn to stick a friendly needle in Cappy, Penn State's first and only Heisman Trophy winner. "We're now in better shape physically than since the season began," Paterno said. "And I don't think it will be like the Sugar Bowl two years ago. I don't think anybody will chicken out this time."

There was a dull silver sky over the gray concrete walls of the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Day. Down in the bowl, the final preparations for the classic were underway.

Judge, the little black bear cub that Baylor uses for its mascot, was romping and playing with a football in the center of a ring of photographers and cameramen. At one point he romped a little too far out of the circle and his trainer stomped down on his chain. That brought him to a very quick and complete stop. Judge was then dragged back into the middle of the photographers and a football was shoved into his stomach. Frustrated, he chewed it up.

In front of the Penn State bench a high school majorette in tight red hot pants and white boots was shivering too hard to keep her knees still. At one end of the bench sat Cappelletti, his black hair spilling onto the collar of a soft leather coat. Between Cappelletti and the majorette was a bright yellow cameraman from Waco television station KWTX. The station had seven cameramen on the field filming for a one and a half hour special on the Baylor football team—but only if it won. "If the Bears lose today," one cameraman said, "there won't be a special."

One at a time, the officials began to appear at the doorway of their dressing room, but none looked very anxious to have the game begin. In the nearby Penn State locker room, evangelist Billy Graham and Penn State President John Oswald were providing last minute distractions.

As Penn State took the field, Greg Murphy took his last pre-game somersault in front of the bench. Most of the seniors shook each others hands in a way that was more solemn and genuine than usual. In their faces and handshakes were many different feelings: friendship, excitement, nervousness, fear and a knowledge that their last college game at Penn State was ready to begin. When everything was ready and the game hadn't started, Penn State's All-America defensive tackle Mike Hartenstine sat down by himself and moved his knees back and forth, wanting to lose his nervousness, to have the contest begin.

By halftime, the uncertainty as to Baylor's strength and speed was gone. At that point, the players said afterward, they knew they could take Baylor. Early in the third period, just before the gates broke open, Paterno took off his coat. "I



Photo by Ira Joffe

*When things finally became unbearable, Judge, the Baylor mascot, chewed up the ball*