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A giant umbrella raised in less than three hours may be in the works for Atlanta Stadium.

Proposed to Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen today was an historic first--an air-supported stadium roof project costing less than one third that for previous similar projects.

The plastic umbrella, going up or down according to the weather, could become a model for other stadium structures in the country. Its development resulted from the joint efforts of the architects who designed Atlanta Stadium and a Buffalo, N. Y., manufacturing company.

Architects George T. Heery of Heery & Heery and James H. Finch of Finch, Alexander, Barnes, Rothschild & Paschal presented Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. their solution to a stadium dome to assure fair weather for all athletic contests and other events at Atlanta Stadium.

"The beauty of this type of covering," the architects said, "is its flexibility. We can have sunshine for our grass in fair weather and still provide complete protection for fans whenever the rains come."

The unique design will give Atlanta the largest protected playing field in the world, exceeding by far Houston's celebrated Astrodome in size and spectator capacity.

A 300-foot tall telescoping mast in the center of the field would raise the roof into place, and then would retract into a missile type "silo" leaving the stadium covered and ready for use in only three hours erection time.

Mayor Allen had requested the architect's study, seeking a way to cover Atlanta Stadium without the expense and problems encountered by Houston with its permanent dome.

"Atlanta's weather is unusually good," he had pointed out, "for both baseball and football. We were looking for a device to assure Atlanta fans and those who travel from Southeastern cities that they would see the scheduled contests."

Heating and cooling will still be possible under the umbrella arrangement, if the Atlanta Stadium Authority feels the expense is justified. However, a ventilation system will be a part of the original project that will maintain comfortable conditions for the 3-4 hours of expected periods of use.

The plastic roof initially will demand modifications of lighting, portal vestibules and other work which will run the total cost to four to five million dollars. But this compares with a \$15-18 million figure for dome structures and mechanical systems proposed in the past.

Houston Stadium was constructed with dome at a cost of about \$38 million, and is over 100 feet smaller than Atlanta Stadium, with 10,000 less seating capacity.

Construction cost of Atlanta Stadium was \$18 million, including land, financing cost and other fees connected with the revenue bond.

The new umbrella dome would give Atlanta the world's largest roof span with approximately 740 feet in diameter, free of obstruction.

Various forms of design since the early 1920's in Germany have flirted with oval coverings, beginning with the Zeiss-Dywidag method extending to the Union dome in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1958--at that time the largest dome ever built, measuring 384 feet in diameter and rising to 116 feet.

The Buffalo, N. Y., firm who participated in the Atlanta proposal, estimates the roof system, ventilation system and air support equipment will probably cost \$1½ to \$2 million, excluding the lighting changes.

A byproduct of the lighting modification would be raising of light level to ideal requirements for night color television.