



## ICAHN STADIUM

Date opened: **April 23, 2005**  
Original building: **1936**  
Certification: **First IAAF championship certified track in U.S.**  
Total cost: **\$45 million**  
Seating: **5,000, expandable to 10,000**  
Track: **400 meter**  
Additional Facilities: **Fitness room and dance studio**

Sport Architecture  
(USA)

SINCE APRIL 23, 2005, ATHLETES FROM AROUND THE WORLD HAVE BEEN DISCOVERING NEW YORK CITY'S HIDDEN JEWEL IN TRACK & FIELD – THE ICAHN STADIUM ON RANDALL'S ISLAND PARK. THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND IN NORTH AMERICA, THIS 5,000 SEAT, WORLD-CLASS STADIUM WAS THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATION (IAAF) CERTIFIED CHAMPIONSHIP-QUALITY TRACK AND FIELD FACILITY IN THE UNITED STATES FOR LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL OUTDOOR COMPETITION. MULTIPLE WORLD RECORDS HAVE BEEN BROKEN ON THIS MONDO SUPER-X TRACK THAT IS BOOKED SEVEN DAYS A WEEK.

With a cost of \$45 million for construction, Icahn Stadium was completed with a combination of private and public funding. The final \$10 million came through a naming sponsorship by New York City financier **Carl Icahn**.

### HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Though New York residents are aware of Icahn Stadium because of its prominent sign located across the river from Manhattan, many people do not know that it is the **official outdoor municipal track and field center for New York City**. While it is a high caliber facility, many people do not know who uses it on a regular basis. In fact, the overwhelming number of athletes that participate in events at Icahn Stadium are school-aged children. After only two years of operation, Icahn Stadium hosted more than 200,000 high school, college and professional athletes and spectators during the track season. Each year, the number of meets and events that are scheduled has grown, bringing larger numbers of people to the facility. "It's a very unique stadium in New York in that it has covered seating," says Louis Vazquez, director for Icahn Stadium. "All of the field events are done on the premium turf inside of the track and the addition of two 100-foot light towers allows us to run a number of events in the evening." Beyond the track activities, Icahn Stadium has meeting rooms, a dance studio and a fitness center.

### SEASONAL PARTNERS

The busiest time of the year for Icahn Stadium is from the second week of March until the end of June. "We have track meets on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and practice days are Tuesday and Thursday," says Vazquez.

"Our schedule coincides with the New York Armory track & field center in that our main months of activity begin after the Armory ends its season in April. In addition to our main programs through the spring and summer, we do events that run into October."



## MANY ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

From a design point of view, Icahn Stadium is configured in a way people have never seen before due to its position on Randall's Island. "It can be seen from Manhattan because it is near the edge of the island, and it is right up against the Triborough Robert F. Kennedy Bridge," says Ricardo Zurita, principal with Zurita Architects who was responsible for the facility's design. "This location forced us to rethink how to organize the track and field stadium. Normally, participants and spectators enter through the front but in the case of Icahn Stadium, that front is right against a very large bridge." The design has the main public entrance at the north end of the building. A linear plaza allows people to look onto the track as they are waiting to enter the stadium, with views beyond to the Harlem River and the Manhattan skyline. A private entrance and parking for athletes is set on the bridge side of the stadium. The large, cantilevered roof is supported by thin cables and from a distance appears to hover with no means of support. "The front wall is a large, monolithic V-shaped structure," says Zurita. "Everything in the design was deliberate to give the stadium a presence in relation to the site, in particular the enormous bridge. Icahn Stadium is surprisingly robust and present, when it could have easily been insignificant in comparison to its surroundings." It was also important to the City administration that the stadium have a presence on the skyline. This is more than achieved by the Icahn Stadium sign on the rooftop that is lit at night.

## QUALITY WAS PRIORITY ONE

The \$45 million cost for Icahn Stadium may seem like a significant amount of money, but in comparison, other stadiums of its kind require three digit budgets. "The project was very much focused on the bottom line," says Zurita. "We spent a lot of effort streamlining materials and technologies to keep it as straightforward and simple as possible. But the one thing we never gave up on was the quality of the track. We built an economical, publicly owned facility but at the same time it has the same track that was used in several Olympic Games. It was very important that this be a world-class facility." The goal set from the city of New York was that this facility could host quality track meets including such things as Olympic trials and regional invitationals for professionals. At the same time, the administration wanted to see a facility that could be completely focused not on the professionals but on the school-age children.

## GAINING SPECTATOR MOMENTUM

"When we launched the **Adidas Grand Prix** at Icahn Stadium in 2005, it was a struggle to get fans and spectators interested enough to come out to Randall's Island for a track meet," says Rich Kenah, director of marketing for **Global Athletics & Marketing Inc.** "However, the performance of the athletes over the years has been a big part of event's success. Athletes know that when they come to the Icahn Stadium, they know they're going to run faster on the Mondo track. We have increased our seating every year because spectators and media know they're going to get a good show." This success has resulted in the building of up to 5,000 additional temporary seats during the Adidas Grand Prix.

## RECORD BREAKING RESULTS

The Mondo surface at Icahn Stadium has garnered a reputation for being a fast track. Since opening in 2005, athletes have shattered world records. In 2006, Olympic Champion **Meseret Defar** ran the women's 5,000 race in record time of 14:24.53.

## BRIGHT FUTURE

As the reputation for Icahn Stadium continues to grow, athletes from around the world will make plans to attend meets, hoping they, too, will have their name in the record books for fastest times known to their sport.

## 2013: A YEAR OF RENOVATIONS AND PRIZES

Icahn Stadium decided to renew the track at the beginning of 2013, when the facility hosted the **New York ADIDAS Grand Prix**; the event was the palcoscenico of excellent performances by some of the best world athletics interpreters. During this occasion **many seasonal and meeting records have been set**, thanks also to the new track that was just been renewed.

Also in December 2013 **SBA** has awarded Icahn Stadium with the title of **Outdoor Track Facility of the Year**. Icahn Stadium at **Randall's Island** in New York was the first athletic facility in the United States to receive the prestigious **Class 1** certification by the **International Association of Athletics Federations**, so it meets the precise quality and performance requirements laid down by the IAAF, including those for synthetic track surfaces. Only 2 venues in the U.S. and 104 internationally are IAAF Class 1 certified.







