

# Dallas Cowboys Head Coaches History



Dallas Cowboys head coaches history is a rich tapestry of leadership, strategy, and football excellence that has shaped one of the most iconic franchises in the National Football League (NFL). Since their inception in 1960, the Dallas Cowboys have been led by a diverse group of head coaches, each contributing their unique style and philosophy to the team. This article explores the history of head coaches for the Cowboys, highlighting their achievements, coaching styles, and the impact they had on the franchise and its fans.

## Early Years: 1960–1966

The Dallas Cowboys were established in 1960, and their first head coach was Tom Landry. His tenure laid the foundation for the franchise's future success.

### Tom Landry (1960–1988)

1. **Foundational Leadership:** Tom Landry was not just the first head coach; he was a pioneer who instituted many strategies that are now standard in the NFL, such as the 4-3 defense and the use of advanced game film analysis.
2. **Super Bowl Success:** Under Landry's guidance, the Cowboys reached five Super Bowls, winning two (Super Bowl VI and Super Bowl XII). His ability to adapt and innovate kept the Cowboys competitive for nearly three decades.
3. **Legacy:** Landry's influence went beyond the field; he became a symbol of the Cowboys' brand, known for his fedora and stoic demeanor on the sidelines.

His contributions earned him a place in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1990.

## **The 1990s: A Decade of Dominance**

The 1990s were marked by the Cowboys' resurgence as a dominant force in the NFL, largely due to the leadership of Jimmy Johnson and Barry Switzer.

### **Jimmy Johnson (1989–1993)**

1. **Building a Dynasty:** After taking over from Landry, Johnson transformed the struggling Cowboys into a powerhouse. His aggressive approach to building the team through the draft and trades paid off.
2. **Super Bowl Championships:** Johnson led the Cowboys to two consecutive Super Bowl victories (XXVII and XXVIII). His focus on speed and talent acquisition revolutionized how teams approached building rosters.
3. **Conflict and Departure:** Despite his success, Johnson's relationship with owner Jerry Jones became strained, leading to his resignation after the 1993 season. His legacy, however, thrived as he set the stage for continued success.

### **Barry Switzer (1994–1997)**

1. **Smooth Transition:** Switzer, who had previously won a national championship at Oklahoma, took over following Johnson's departure. He maintained the Cowboys' winning culture and high expectations.
2. **Super Bowl XXX:** Switzer captured his first Super Bowl title as Cowboys head coach in 1995, solidifying the team's place in NFL lore. His ability to manage star players lessened the transition's impact from Johnson's regime.
3. **Mixed Results:** While Switzer had immediate success, his later years were marked by inconsistency, leading to a decline in performance and his eventual departure after the 1997 season.

## **The Turn of the Century: 1998–2006**

Following the decade of dominance, the early 2000s saw a shift in the Cowboys' fortunes and coaching staff.

### **Chan Gailey (1998–2000)**

1. **Struggles and Transition:** Gailey took over amidst a challenging period as the team tried to rebuild post-Switzer. He led the Cowboys to two playoff appearances but failed to reach the Super Bowl.

2. Coaching Style: Gailey's focus was more conservative compared to his predecessors, which received criticism from fans and analysts alike.

## **Dave Campo (2000–2002)**

1. Difficult Tenure: Campo struggled significantly during his three-year term, finishing with a record of 15–33. His tenure is often remembered for the team's lack of direction and poor performance.

2. Development Focus: Campo attempted to develop young talent, but the lack of immediate success led to his dismissal after the 2002 season.

## **Bill Parcells (2003–2006)**

1. Resurgence: Parcells, known as "The Big Tuna," brought a wealth of experience and success to the Cowboys. He revitalized the team, leading them back to the playoffs in 2003.

2. Impact on Culture: Parcells emphasized discipline and accountability, reshaping the team's culture. He helped draft significant players like Tony Romo and DeMarcus Ware.

3. Legacy: Although he did not win a Super Bowl with the Cowboys, Parcells is credited with laying the groundwork for future success, including the development of young talent.

## **The New Era: 2007–Present**

The late 2000s ushered in a new generation of coaches and players, with varying degrees of success.

## **Wade Phillips (2007–2010)**

1. Playoff Appearances: Phillips led the Cowboys to the playoffs in both 2007 and 2009, including a memorable win in the 2009 Wild Card round.

2. Defensive Mindset: Known for his defensive acumen, Phillips focused on building a strong defense, though the team struggled in critical playoff games.

## **Jason Garrett (2010–2019)**

1. Long Tenure: Garrett, who started as an interim coach, was later promoted to head coach. He became one of the longest-serving coaches in team history, leading the Cowboys to three playoff appearances.

2. Offensive Innovation: Under Garrett, the Cowboys embraced a modern offensive philosophy, focusing on a dynamic passing game and player

development.

3. Mixed Success: While Garrett had some successful seasons, fans often criticized his inability to advance past the Divisional Round, leading to his departure in 2019.

## **Mike McCarthy (2020–Present)**

1. Super Bowl Experience: McCarthy, a Super Bowl-winning coach with the Green Bay Packers, took over with high expectations. His experience brought a new perspective to the team.

2. Building a Championship Culture: McCarthy's focus on creating a winning culture and developing young talent has been evident, as the team has reached the playoffs multiple times under his leadership.

3. Future Outlook: As of the 2023 season, McCarthy continues to adapt in an evolving NFL landscape, seeking to lead the Cowboys back to Super Bowl glory.

## **Conclusion**

The Dallas Cowboys head coaches history is marked by a blend of innovation, strategy, and a quest for excellence. From Tom Landry's foundational years to the recent leadership of Mike McCarthy, each coach has left an indelible mark on the franchise. The legacy of these coaches is not just measured in wins and losses but also in the culture they cultivated and the impact they had on players and fans alike. As the Cowboys continue to strive for their sixth Super Bowl title, the history of their head coaches remains a vital part of their identity in the NFL.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Who was the first head coach of the Dallas Cowboys?**

The first head coach of the Dallas Cowboys was Tom Landry, who led the team from 1960 to 1988.

### **How many Super Bowl championships have the Dallas Cowboys won under their head coaches?**

The Dallas Cowboys have won five Super Bowl championships, with head coaches Tom Landry, Jimmy Johnson, and Barry Switzer.

### **Which Dallas Cowboys head coach is known for the phrase 'How 'bout them Cowboys!'?**

The phrase 'How 'bout them Cowboys!' is famously associated with former head coach Jimmy Johnson.

## Who was the head coach of the Dallas Cowboys during their most recent Super Bowl appearance?

The head coach during the Dallas Cowboys' most recent Super Bowl appearance in 1995 was Barry Switzer.

## Which Dallas Cowboys head coach had the longest tenure?

Tom Landry had the longest tenure as head coach of the Dallas Cowboys, serving for 29 seasons from 1960 to 1988.

## What is the overall win-loss record of the Dallas Cowboys under head coach Jason Garrett?

Under head coach Jason Garrett, the Dallas Cowboys had an overall win-loss record of 85 wins and 67 losses from 2010 to 2019.

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