

EPISODE 178

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[00:00:07] IP: Hello and welcome to Episode 178 of AvTalk. I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[00:00:16] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. What's going on, Ian?

[00:00:18] IP: Hello, Jason. How are you, sir?

[00:00:20] JR: I'm good. Thank you. How are you?

[00:00:22] IP: I'm well. I'm back. How was your week off?

[00:00:25] JR: Good. You found me.

[00:00:26] IP: I did.

[00:00:26] JR: Where did you find me? We can't tell anyone.

[00:00:28] IP: Oh, in an alley somewhere behind the dumpster.

[00:00:31] JR: It happened. To clarify, you are somewhere on vacation. I was here at home, doing nothing on Wednesday afternoon, saying, "What am I going to do without a podcast recording?" But you actually went into the woods and stuff.

[00:00:44] IP: Well, I went into the beach. I went into the woods. We took the kids up to Michigan for a little bit before school started and enjoyed ourselves for a few days. Now, they are back in school. We are back at the microphone and it is podcast time, my friend. We've got a very good show. This week, we had our chief short answer correspondent, Ned Russell on very, very briefly last week to discuss the news about American Airlines. Boom, this week, we've

got Brett Snyder on in a little bit to talk more in depth about the order, about some analysis that he's done, because why not?

[00:01:27] JR: Yeah. We're going to elaborate a little bit from that comment the week prior.

[00:01:32] IP: Yeah. Just a little bit, though. Brett will be on a little bit later in the show. We've got two weeks' worth of news to get through. Not a whole lot happened last week, thankfully. I was able to actually enjoy a little bit of my vacation. This week, we dive back in with some, I guess, regional news. We've got, the first bit is that Air Wisconsin is switching their capacity, basically. Air Wisconsin is currently one of the regional carriers for United Airlines, and beginning no later than March. By March, it will switch from flying for United to flying for American Airlines, up to 60 of their – and this is the part that pains me. Up to 60 CRJ200s.

[00:02:26] JR: Yeah. Where were those be based? Is it one of your home airports?

[00:02:31] IP: Oh, it is my home of home airports. They'll be based at O'Hare, just south of Wisconsin, which I guess is appropriate.

[00:02:38] JR: Maybe they will even fly to Wisconsin on that needless Chicago to Milwaukee route. Does American operate that, or is that only United?

[00:02:46] IP: You know what? I don't know if both operate them. Though, I assume at this point, they probably operate at least one per day just for feeding.

[00:02:54] JR: Oh, American does. Yup. American operates it. You'll still have a chance to fly here, Milwaukee to Milwaukee, Air Wisconsin to Milwaukee.

[00:03:01] IP: Air Wisconsin in Milwaukee. They ramp up beginning in March through the end of the summer season. Then, there's a possibility that they go from 40 to 60, and the CRJ200s. As part of that, Air Wisconsin will end its agreement with United. United has been a purchaser of Air Wisconsin's capacity for a very long time. At one point, I'm pretty sure they even had a stake in the airline that they've long since left in the great disbanding of regional carriers a few years

ago. But, they're moving wholly over to American. That will be that as far as the CRJ200 goes for United.

It's an interesting move, because it's a lot of aircraft all at once, basically leaving out of the domestic fleet. United has said that it wants to refocus on increasing their mainline flying. This all works out. In the end, I'm sure it'll all work out. In that mid period, it'll be interesting to see how they fill those holes.

[00:04:05] JR: Oh, good riddance, because as someone who somewhat frequently ended up on an Air Wisconsin CRJ200 out of LaGuardia, on one of the few United flights, I could not be any happier that that will not happen again. Even though, United has shifted most of its regional operations at LaGuardia to the E-175 family, or even the CRJ550, which as we know is a 70-seat aircraft with only 50 seats onboard. That's a much better deal for me in this transfer.

[00:04:35] IP: All in all, the only thing that matters is that Jason benefits from it.

[00:04:39] JR: I come out looking great in this situation. However, there's the whole situation about the pilots and the pilot flow and the aviate academy. At the end, yeah, American gets some crappy planes that nobody really wants, but they get the pilots and they get the, I guess, whoever was in pilot school, or AVH, or whatever we want to call it, but American stands to gain in just having an inflow of pilots that would have, in the past gone to United, now ended up at American.

[00:05:09] IP: It's the story of any acquisition these days. I mean, whether we're talking about JetBlue and Spirit, or any of the regional moves. Everything has been done. It's either acquiring pilots, somehow, aircraft and pilots somehow, or making sure that you're retaining them. That brings us into our next story, which is talking about CommutAir being the next regional airline to give their pilots a healthy raise.

[00:05:37] JR: Well, that's good news. Everyone loves a healthy raise.

[00:05:39] IP: Yeah. CommutAir is a regional carrier that is partially owned by and flies for United. This follows the – we're flipping back and forth between United and American regional

carriers so much, I'm making sure I'm getting this right today. Three regional carriers owned by American Airlines got pay increases earlier this summer, or announced pay increases earlier this summer. CommutAir is operating for United. They're getting theirs. Now, they're going up from, they are hiking their first officers' pay from \$51 per hour, starting first officers, \$51 per hour to \$72 per hour. Starting pay for captains will go from \$84 per hour to \$100 per hour. Not bad at all.

In addition, they're getting bonuses. Annual retention bonuses will be paid to first officers \$25,000 annual retention bonus to first officers and a \$50,000 retention bonus to the captains. I mean, all in all, great increase in pay. One of the criticisms of the increase in pay to the airlines owned by American Airlines, the pilots operating for airlines owned by American Airlines was that it was a larger bump, but it wasn't going to last very long. In this case, this is for the entirety of the contract, so this pay will be locked in through 20 –

[00:07:04] JR: No backseat from this one.

[00:07:06] IP: Yeah. This one's through 2026. It'll be interesting to see if this is the last of the pay raises for regional pilots that we see. My thinking is probably not. Though, it'll be interesting to see where the next one comes from.

[00:07:20] JR: Yeah. It certainly won't be coming from anyone who works for ExpressJet.

[00:07:26] IP: Ouch.

[00:07:27] JR: Yeah. You might remember a few months ago, ExpressJet, they were jettisoned from their mainline partners. Who were they operating for? United at the time, I think.

[00:07:36] IP: United.

[00:07:37] JR: United. Here we go. United again, jettisoned the regional partner, in this case ExpressJet, I think, back in 2020. Then they pivoted and they started up AHA. AHA was never really quite a well thought out, or successfully launched concept. They were supposed to be this

whole encompassing travel booking service where you booked – I think, it was you booked your flight, your hotel and your adventure or whatever.

[00:08:03] IP: AHA stood for Airline Hotel Adventure.

[00:08:06] JR: There you go. It's right there in the name. They only ever got the airline part down there. It turns out no hotel wanted, or needed to partner with them, since –

[00:08:14] IP: If you land without a hotel. that's an adventure.

[00:08:17] JR: That is an adventure. Hotels these days are so fully booked, they don't need something like an AHA operating from Reno to wherever AHA operated to. They racked up quite a hefty bit of debt. I think, you ran the numbers earlier.

[00:08:34] IP: I did not.

[00:08:35] JR: I think that was Ned Russell did?

[00:08:37] IP: Yeah. It was Ned Russell. Taking a look at Jeremy Dwyer-Lindgren, and Ned Russell took a crack at the numbers. We were talking that before we recorded. We'll mention that they did the legwork. The numbers were abysmal, awful, terrible. Not good.

[00:08:52] JR: No. I'm trying to scroll back in our conversation to see exactly where – There we go. 5.5 million in revenues year-to-date in 2022 compared against 23 million dollars in expenses. Their expense is more than 4X outweighed their revenue, which is not good. It sucks to see that this is the end, again, to ExpressJet, they've gone through several ends. At this point, it looks like they are going – They filed for Chapter 11 and they will liquidate this time. They will not pivot to do something else. They're going to liquidate. It's the end of a – I'm not going to say, historic regional airline, but they've been around a while.

It sucks anytime an airline goes out of business like this, because people lose their jobs and their livelihood and in this backwards country, they'll lose their health care and all that good stuff. It's unfortunate, but I don't think this is anything that we didn't see coming, unfortunately.

[00:09:41] IP: The concept, I think, was flawed generally, but given everything else that's happening right now, it came together to force their hand. Whether or not operating a small regional jet operation out of Reno as a hub, trying to get people to bring skis and boots, and everything like that and deal with the aspect of getting hotels to work with you, and that wasn't going to happen at the moment, and trying to be this adventure carrier. There may be a place for that somewhere, but I don't think it's right now.

[00:10:21] JR: Especially not if they didn't have the concept fully baked and couldn't actually deliver on the hotel, or adventure of AHA **[inaudible 00:10:28]**.

[00:10:28] IP: Right. If it then locked in already, maybe we're talking about a different outcome. To try and launch this, yeah, I don't –

[00:10:35] JR: They are liquidating those E-145s, will probably end up in the desert. I can't imagine there are that many airlines out there actively seeking E-145s, but somebody might take them. Who knows?

[00:10:46] IP: Yeah.

[00:10:47] JR: We learned that they said in their release that they actually operated flights for JetBlue way back in the day. Apparently, when their E-190s were in for modification. I did not know that. Today I learned.

[00:10:58] IP: Today I also learned. That's some good airline trivia.

[00:11:01] JR: Yeah.

[00:11:03] IP: Let's shift our focus, keeping it with things that are not great, but things that are maybe getting better with this newly announced scheme by Schiphol Airport to reimburse some of the costs, basically, entering an EU 261 style scheme for the airport induced costs that passengers endured.

[00:11:27] JR: Yeah. This is a real unexpected and weird one. We all know and love EU 261, which is the rule, regulation, whatever, in the EU that if your flight is canceled, diverted, significantly delayed, you get a combinations. You get possibly some very hefty monetary reward in your favor. They will cover things like hotels and meals. Of course, we don't have anything like that in the US. Nothing like that exists for what happens if the airport goes wrong? All of those rules are in place for what happens if the airline screws up?

This case, Schiphol in Amsterdam has done an odd move here, where if you had a flight between April 23rd and August 11th, sorry, if your flight was delayed because of Amsterdam's operations on August 12th, you're just at a luck. Between those dates, they will compensate for things that would typically be compensated under EU 261. Compensation costs incurred for rebooking a flight, if you booked a replacement flight, alternative transport, if you chose to travel to a destination by other means of, "Screw it. I'm not going to fly. I'm going to take a train." Extra travel costs incurred to travel to Amsterdam, or another airport.

Accommodation costs at or near the airport, expenses for non-cancelable accommodation transport or activities at the destination. If you were on a seven-hour long security line, hypothetically to Amsterdam, and you missed your flight to say, Birmingham, then you had a non-cancelable hotel, and I don't know, tour of Birmingham or whatever, and you ate that cost, Amsterdam, it seems like they will cover that cost at least to some degree, which is really above and beyond and unexpected. I've never heard of an airline doing that. Sorry. I said instinctively airline, but I've never heard of an airport doing something like this before.

[00:13:22] IP: Yeah. I can't think of any organized scheme like this, where an airport has –

[00:13:26] JR: Maybe it's happened in the past where like, "Oh, crap. You got stuck in the elevator. We'll take care of you." I know that's happened in the past, but we're talking about potentially millions of people impacted here, and possibly a lot of money. You have until September 30th to submit a request. If you flew between April 23rd and August 11th, you have until September 30th to submit a request. Bring receipts.

[00:13:50] IP: Lots and lots and lots of receipts. Yes. Let's shift our attention now to something that we talked about a few weeks ago, which was the announcement that Wizz Air Abu Dhabi

was going to restart flights to Russia. We talked about the criticism that the airline had endured at the time. Basically, a lot of criticism towards the airline saying, you shouldn't be doing this. The airline said, "Well, we're based in Abu Dhabi. There are no legal restrictions on this. This isn't Wizz Air. This is Wizz Air Abu Dhabi." A lot of the criticism was, what difference does that make? It's a legal distinction without a difference. Now, they are announcing, they will in fact not restart service. Though, they are not saying it's because of the criticism. They are saying, it's because of industry supply chain limitations.

[00:14:46] JR: You know, Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, there's a legal distinction. They would like to remind you of that. They could have taken the win here and just said, "Okay, we heard you. We're not going to do it." To do this crap and call it industry supply chain limitations. It just removed any possible goodwill from this decision. Not only are they not going to operate the flights, and they're not going to find this windfall of profit that I'm sure exists on the route. They're not even going to get the goodwill associated with doing the right thing. That's just, what's going on there.

[00:15:14] IP: That's called shooting yourself in the foot.

[00:15:15] JR: It is. Wow. I mean, there's a lot of money to be made on that route. But doing the right thing and then blaming it on the wrong thing is just a bad move.

[00:15:25] IP: Yeah. I'm sure there are indeed industry supply chain limitations somewhere, but that's not what's going on here.

[00:15:31] JR: Nope.

[00:15:32] IP: Let's take a quick break. We'll come back with Brett Snyder Cranky Flier and we will talk about Ameraboom and what's going on with that. Stay with us, we will be back in just a sec.

[BREAK]

[00:15:48] IP: Welcome back. We are now joined by Brett Snyder from crankyflier.com. He is the gentleman who has most recently taken a magnifying glass to some announcements regarding Boom's supersonic aircraft. We, of course, refer to the American Airlines non-refundable deposits. We're here to break down what American did beyond the comments last week from our chief short answer correspondent, Ned Russell, who so eloquently sums things up. But we're going to expand on that this week with Brett and talk about Brett's analysis of where American could actually use the planes, assuming they enter service anywhere near when they are currently scheduled to enter service. Brett, thank you so much for joining us.

[00:16:33] BS: It's my pleasure. Calling me a gentleman, this is very fancy. I got to get my –

[00:16:37] IP: First time for everything, right?

[00:16:39] BS: That's right. I'm going to get a top hat and a monocle now.

[00:16:41] JR: Being a little generous.

[00:16:43] BS: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:16:44] IP: That's how we traditionally record the podcast, wearing top hats. That's why we're not a video podcast, because we can't fit the hats in the video for it.

[00:16:52] BS: Well, you need to go vertical. I know it's not what you do. Then you can really get it in there to work.

[00:16:58] IP: TikTok, here we come.

[00:16:59] JR: Oh, God.

[00:17:02] IP: American and Boom together announced the American Airlines agreement to purchase up to 20, which I thought was an interesting way to phrase things, up to 20 with an option for an additional 40. It's not even an order for 20 aircraft. It's an order for up to 20 aircraft.

They paid, and this was the important part. They put money down. They paid a non-refundable deposit on the initial 20 aircraft.

[00:17:28] JR: We don't know what that deposit is, but some sort – It could be a penny for all we know. We truly do not know.

[00:17:36] BS: That's what I was thinking. It's like a loony. It's just like an alien dollar, or just –

[00:17:41] IP: Could have been a toonie.

[00:17:42] BS: Whoa, whoa, whoa. That's big money there. Hold on.

[00:17:45] IP: Let's not get ahead of ourselves. I know, right? One of the things that I think it was Ethan Clapper mentioned that one of the American Airlines, it could have been Derek Kerr, the CFO mentioned that this would not trigger a filing with the SEC as a material event. I guess, that sets the bar pretty low for how much money exchanged hands. Not a lot. Not a lot. Let's talk about the order, which is it's a lot of aircraft.

[00:18:17] BS: Yeah. Well, I think it's no coincidence that the 60 airplanes they could take matches the number that Air Wisconsin will be flying for American. Clearly, this is a replacement plan for the Air Wisconsin CRJ fleet. Breaking news.

[00:18:31] JR: That checks out. That all checks out.

[00:18:35] BS: I think we got it.

[00:18:36] IP: We figured it out. There it is. Let's take this at face value. We've got 20 aircraft scheduled for delivery. That is compared to United's 15. United took an option for 35 more. American took an option for an additional 40. That's 10 more aircraft. Brett, your analysis took all of this at face value, and basically, came to the conclusion that it's too many aircraft?

[00:19:02] BS: Well, sure. I mean, there's not an aircraft, so we don't really know what we're talking about yet.

[00:19:08] IP: We're talking all in grand hypotheticals. If only because they put some money down, and if they're putting money down, surely, if we're taking them at face value, they believe in the aircraft. This is not to say that we should take any of this at face value, but we've had that conversation multiple times on the podcast before. Let's say, we are taking it at face value.

[00:19:28] BS: Yes, let's do that. Also taking it at face value, we then have to also say, the range estimates and the passenger loads, we have to take those as well. Generally, aircraft manufacturers will lie about their range. That's any airplane, because that's in perfect conditions and all that stuff. When I looked at it, I lopped off 10%, which may not have been enough, but that was my starting point of just saying, where could this airplane fly without being forced to refuel mid-air or land in the ocean.

[00:20:06] IP: Okay. The stated range of the aircraft at the moment is 65 to 80 passengers at Mach 1.7, flying 4,250 nautical miles.

[00:20:17] JR: Keeping in mind, they don't have an engine even designed, let alone actually, and testing it. All of these hypotheticals about range, they're very hypothetical.

[00:20:28] BS: Oh, yeah. We're suspending disbelief today, right?

[00:20:31] JR: Right, right, right. My mistake.

[00:20:32] IP: That's the title of this episode.

[00:20:33] BS: Suspending disbelief. Perfect.

[00:20:35] IP: Hey, why not?

[00:20:36] BS: Yeah. If you do that, I mean, you don't even have to give it a haircut. You could even say like, all right, the number they're saying is real. It doesn't add that much in terms of what they could reach. The other problem, of course, is right in the name of the company. It's the Sonic Boom.

[00:20:52] IP: I still appreciate the fact that they named company after the thing that will probably doom the company.

[00:21:00] JR: Their biggest problem is right there in the name. They have stated as such that this aircraft, overture, it is not something designed to overcome the Sonic Boom. That is not a goal of this aircraft. There's been some confusion of that. No, this aircraft still will not be able to travel at supersonic speeds over populated areas. Forget that outright.

[00:21:19] BS: Right. Now, also, though, I think we need to appreciate the name even more, because forgetting about the Sonic Boom, what is the last thing that you want to have your airplane associated with? Some boom? That's not how you want your flight –

[00:21:32] IP: Of boom of any kind, really.

[00:21:34] BS: It's not good. It's not great. Yeah, so they've really owned that, apparently. Yeah. I mean, I think that's the important piece. You can't fly over populated areas, at least not in countries that care about their populations. That severely limits where you could use this thing.

[00:21:49] IP: Then, let's talk about the ocean. The Atlantic Ocean is not as wide as the Pacific Ocean, which happens to be wide enough to severely limit where you can use this aircraft at this range, especially focusing on American's route network.

[00:22:08] BS: I mean, I don't know that it's even especially Americans route network. It's anyone's work at that range. I think, Seattle, Tokyo is – or what was it? It was just under 4,200. In theory, that could potentially make it, but come on, you'd never get that close to the range, even if the manufacturer has an airplane with an engine that reaches that stated range. I think your only real choice is on the Pacific, or find a way to build a hub in Anchorage, or take all the Japanese tourists to Hawaii. I did think that was really interesting that American put in the press release that it could reduce the time on LA-Honolulu to three hours.

[00:22:48] JR: I like your analysis on that bit. So what? Who cares?

[00:22:51] BS: Right. That's the problem with it. Who cares? I mean, the beauty of Concorde was that you could leave London, get to New York in the morning and have a full day of work. It added a tremendous amount of value for people where time is money. You could really do something with that. You could also be in London for dinner from New York if you needed to. I mean, it created really big differences, but three hours, versus five and a half hours from LA to Honolulu, nobody cares. That doesn't make a difference.

[00:23:22] JR: Let's break that down a little bit. In the admittedly not very long press release issued by American, they said, American has identified how many routes that they think they could put this on in its network?

[00:23:33] BS: What was the number?

[00:23:34] JR: 600 or something?

[00:23:36] BS: Yeah. Well, I mean –

[00:23:38] IP: That's Boom's number. Boom's number is 600.

[00:23:39] JR: That's Boom's number. Okay. But it is still in American's release.

[00:23:44] BS: I'm pretty sure Boom wrote that release.

[00:23:45] JR: Yeah. You're probably not wrong about that. There are a few routes that they call out, specifically. One you mentioned already, LA to Honolulu in three hours. Who cares? There was another interesting one, Miami to London, which you think is actually one of the more plausible, but still not very realistic ones. Why is that?

[00:24:03] BS: Well, I do think it has some opportunity. I mean, these are still – people think of Florida as the vacation town, which it is and all that. That's more BA flying their big, old airplanes into Orlando or something. I mean, Miami does have a business community, that's the self-described capital of Latin America. There probably is some value there. Of course, London maybe diminished now that it's left the EU, but still an important financial capital. I could see that

as being a route where it might work. Okay, that's maybe two-thirds of an airplane. What else you got?

[00:24:41] JR: Yeah. I think what's most confusing about this is taking 20 plus an additional 40. By the way, they only ever built 20 Concorde at all outright and six of those weren't even commercial aircraft, I believe, at least according to Wikipedia. This is, American fleet alone will triple the size that Concorde fleet ever was. They certainly didn't identify a ton of successful routes for that aircraft. It's basically a shuttle bus between New York, London and Paris. I don't understand where they think they're going to end up operating 20, maybe 60 aircraft, especially since they can't even do it over the US. The continent itself, they would have to fly subsonic and that can't possibly be economical.

[00:25:23] BS: Oh, no, no. I can't imagine that it would have much range for that either. That has to just suck up the fuel anyway to be flying it sub-optimally –

[00:25:33] JR: Sustainable fuel.

[00:25:35] BS: Well, Braniff can come back and operate the interchange from Washington and New York down to Dallas. I think, that's what's going to happen. Seems as plausible as anything else.

[00:25:50] IP: Yeah. I mean, here's the thing. That seems at this point as likely to happen as any of this. What is the draw here? Is this just a, I want PR, and this is a cheap and easy way to get it? Is this American going, “I don't want united to have all the supersonic thunder.” This announcement doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me in writ large.

[00:26:14] JR: Me too.

[00:26:16] BS: Yeah. It's like, when United copies Delta's SkyMiles changes. No, I think look, I think we're probably overthinking this. My guess is that Boom desperately wants to keep momentum, wants to have positive press, wants to have something it can talk about. It approached American and said, “Hey, give me a loony or a toonie, and we can say, you gave us a non-refundable deposit. American thinks, well, okay, I mean, if they do magically come up with

something that meets these requirements and has good fuel efficiency, and all that stuff, then great, we'll be first in line. But if not, "Oh, well. What does that mean?"

[00:26:57] JR: Well, that's also another point. Same as United with all of its other eVTOL and whatever orders. They specifically say to American, Boom must meet industry standard operating performance and safety requirements, as well as American's other customary conditions before delivery of any overtures. Again, this order has a huge caveat as they can basically say, "Well, you didn't meet these standards, performance metrics, safety requirements, whatever." Then back out of the deal, they lose their non-refundable Loony, but that's probably not the end of the world.

[00:27:28] BS: Yeah. I mean, we don't know what they put down, but we have to assume it's not a lot. Because the value for Boom is not the money. Boom somehow seems to raise a fair bit of money. The value for Boom is having that order. Then they can go out and raise more money on that, right? I mean, hey, look, we have all this viable commercial action here. Come give us the money, and we'll see. I mean, I'm amazed that they think they can have this flying by 2029. I mean, look at how hard Boeing has tried to certify an airplane. Boom has never done it before.

[00:28:01] IP: Yeah. I think that's the huge question. Like we talked about after Farnborough, Northrop's involvement in the process becomes much more interesting in that regard.

[00:28:10] JR: I don't think that's the biggest question of the biggest question that everyone, including the three of us want to know is, why is there not a rendering in American livery of an overture aircraft? That's the real question. United could not be plastering its rendering with its livery in any more channels. It's in all the airports, the IFE screens, their app. It's everywhere. American didn't even get a rendering with its livery. Why do you think that is, Brett?

[00:28:37] BS: Well, I mean, Boom has standards, Jason.

[00:28:43] JR: There we go.

[00:28:43] BS: They're not going to just let anyone put that ugly flag on the tail.

[00:28:47] JR: I had to set you up for that one.

[00:28:49] BS: It was just served to me on a platter. Yeah. No, that's obviously it. Or, maybe they couldn't get the paint colors right in the image that it was – it's very demanding issue to get that right gray.

[00:29:03] JR: Yeah. For those who don't follow Brett on Twitter, he is very anti-relatively new American livery. I find it quite nice. I like it. He thinks it's the worst thing in the world.

[00:29:15] BS: Oh, I don't know about that. I don't know if it's the worst thing in the world.

[00:29:18] JR: You're not too hot on the southwest hotdog on a stick livery.

[00:29:21] BS: No. This is a whole different podcast. We can get into this stuff.

[00:29:27] JR: I'm okay with it.

[00:29:26] IP: We'll come back to that episode another time.

[00:29:29] BS: I didn't **[inaudible 00:29:30]** this up. All right, never mind. It's the tail. The tail doesn't look right to me. It needs a – It's fine though.

[00:29:37] IP: You know where we can talk about the problems with the Southwest livery, the problems with American livery and all that good fun stuff. We can talk about it at Dork fest, which is coming up in less than a month.

[00:29:47] BS: It is.

[00:29:48] IP: Brett is also, and has been on the podcast before to talk about this, is also the creator, organizer-ish these days. It feels a self-fulfilling gathering somewhat. On the 17th of September, as is customary, a Saturday in September when, I believe, it's UCLA is not playing at home?

[00:30:11] BS: Oh, no. They are, but they decided to put some hot garbage, like South Alabama and some other teams that I was like, "It's not worth it." Normally that is how I approach this. Yes.

[00:30:23] IP: The 17th of September 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. is the schedule and I'm using quotes here. Scheduled time for this. Though, show up whenever stay till whenever. I talk with folks who are obsessed with airplanes, or who just like airplanes and are obsessed with hamburgers that are served near airplanes at LAX. Jason and I have been going for I don't know how many years now. It's something that we look forward to every year. Brett puts on a fantastic event, co-located with NYC Aviation Spot LAX, so there's events all weekend. Dork fest is the original gathering –

[00:31:01] JR: Crowning jewel of the weekend.

[00:31:02] IP: The crowning jewel of the weekend. There will be this year, prizes and raffles and things of that nature, again, we'll of course be contributing some subscriptions to that event as well. Be on the lookout for that. You do need to be present to win if I'm not incorrect, but –

[00:31:21] BS: You are correct.

[00:31:22] IP: If you haven't made your travel plans and you want to go, do so soon.

[00:31:27] BS: Yeah, you should.

[00:31:27] IP: Less than a month away.

[00:31:28] BS: It is. It's coming quick. Yeah, Ian, I mean, you are the one who makes this work here. You go up with that hat on.

[00:31:37] IP: I'm just loud with a bright hat.

[00:31:38] BS: Yeah. No, it's great. It's what we need. We can tie this all together here, though, because last year, I think one of the stars of the show was a United Boom model that United gave away.

[00:31:49] IP: That's right. That's right.

[00:31:51] JR: Maybe this is the first time we'll be able to see an American livery on a Boom aircraft. They want to give one of those away this year.

[00:31:56] BS: You know what? I actually don't know what those guys are doing yet. This has become a thing for the airlines to try and outdo each other and come up with –

[00:32:05] IP: I say, that's fantastic.

[00:32:06] BS: I agree. Because I'm like, great. Give me weird stuff that you can't get elsewhere. I love it. I mean, southwest had that 727 last year. Oh, my God.

[00:32:15] IP: Oh, that was great.

[00:32:16] BS: So awesome.

[00:32:17] IP: That was just fantastic.

[00:32:19] BS: Those kinds of things, I love it. I mean, I know a couple of things that are definitely unique that are coming. We'll see what the other guys do. I haven't really gotten all the answers. I've just heard, they're saying like, "Oh, we're coming up with some ideas." Should be fun. Yeah, come on out. Get a burger, watch airplanes. The weather's always good.

[00:32:39] IP: Well, thank you so much for joining us, Brett Snyder from Cranky Flier. We'll put a link to your analysis, your full analysis of the American Boom order in the shownotes, so people can go and read that and hopefully, some listeners will be at Dork Fest this year. We'll see you there.

[BREAK]

[00:33:00] IP: Welcome back. I think that we're all in agreement that none of this matters at this point.

[00:33:07] JR: No. I don't have a crystal ball, or a time machine. I do wish I could fast forward a few years to see what happens here, without having to wait.

[00:33:15] IP: Exactly. Let's go to a very different aircraft, one that is decidedly not supersonic. One that has real engines, but had some problems. This one's a weird story. Jason, help me out here.

[00:33:30] JR: Yeah. This one comes to us from a bench topic at one mile at a time, who has an interesting tale about a particular Delta Boeing 767-300ER that had some trouble recently. A couple of back-to-back flights. They had in-air diversions back to JFK with some – one of them was a fuel issue, I think, and the other one was, I'm not sure what it was, but they had a couple of annoying diversions back to JFK, where they went two hours out and return, ends up being a five-hour flight to nowhere, which is not great.

The second one of these flights was in route to Accra, Ghana, one of Delta's flights that actually, it was never suspended during COVID. This one is a very popular flight for Delta. The Ghana authorities didn't quite like that this aircraft had multiple in-air diversions and then took in unexplained delay the following day of a couple hours. No big deal. It was a couple of hours. Happens all the time to every airline, to every flight at this point at JFK, but they apparently didn't like Delta's explanation, or they didn't like this aircraft enough to the point where they have – I'm not going to say, BAM, but they have asked Delta firmly to not send this one particular aircraft, N195DV on the flights to Accra again. They said, “You can still operate to Ghana, but please do not send this particular aircraft.”

[00:34:58] IP: Send us a different plane.

[00:35:00] JR: Yeah. I would hate to say, what they would have thought about the later days of Americans 767-300s, which were just awful, awfully unreliable towards the end of their reign of terror.

[00:35:11] IP: He had a dispatch reliability of a cranky mule.

[00:35:15] JR: Yeah, they were not good. It was not rare to see multiple diversions back to their origin on the same day of those aircraft. They would have probably banned the entire fleet, not just this one aircraft. Interestingly, after the couple of diversions here, this particular aircraft has been operating on time back and forth between JFK and LAX. I think it goes out to Europe again in a couple of days, but it's operating fine. They just didn't want this particular aircraft back. You know what? That's up to them. If the Ghana Civil Aviation Authority doesn't trust this particular aircraft, I'm sure Delta will work around it.

[00:35:51] IP: Yeah, it'll be fine, but just an odd thing to politely request that they said.

[00:35:55] JR: Yeah. I hope we don't get to the point where Delta 767s get the reputation and operational dispatch reliability of what did you call it again?

[00:36:05] IP: A cranky mule.

[00:36:05] JR: A cranky mule, that was synonymous with American's 767 operations. Hopefully, Delta can avoid such a reputation.

[00:36:15] IP: In an effort to avoid any reputation of their long-haul fleet, Malaysia Airlines is after the A-330neo. Jason, tell me more.

[00:36:23] JR: Okay. Malaysia has a bunch of A330Cos, and they are now acquiring 20 A330neos, the 900 variant. 10 will be purchased directly from Airbus and 10 will be at leased from Dublin-based Avalon. I think, that replaces 21 A330CO. There's one missing there, which is a bit interesting. This was a long-rumored order finally put in stone, at least. Not set in stone. I think, this was an MOU, a memorandum of understanding. Not quite a firm order, but one step

shy at that. But good news for Malaysia Airlines signing up for the A330neo to replace its CO fleet. Nice, easy transition.

[00:37:04] IP: Yeah. Not much to do there to get them into service. A few quick things as we get towards the end of the show. An Alaska Airlines flight out of Seattle had to go back to Seattle earlier last –

[00:37:17] JR: Yesterday. Monday. What, Monday?

[00:37:20] IP: I don't know what day. Earlier this week. Earlier this week is the phrase that I was looking for. There we go. We made it there. It was a roundabout journey, but we made it there. Flying out of Seattle, bound for San Diego, didn't make it very far, because the cowling on the left engine came off.

[00:37:36] JR: Whoops. It came off in spectacular –

[00:37:38] IP: Or skewer to come off.

[00:37:39] JR: It came off in spectacular fashion. Once they landed, it tore itself to pieces and threw itself all over the runway, which is not great.

[00:37:47] IP: Not great. Flight landed safely. Everyone made it off okay, and onto their destination with not too much delay.

[00:37:55] JR: Yeah. Somebody, or multiple people probably screwed up here. The investigation that maybe the NTSB will do, at least certainly Alaska is going to do one. Either maintenance personnel earlier in the day, probably maybe topped off oil or something. It didn't quite latch the cowling down properly. Then the first officer, or maybe the captain of the flight doing the walk around did not catch that it was not latched down correctly. Or, maybe it was just something else. Maybe there was fatigue on the latch or something. We will see. But most likely, somebody screwed up here and didn't quite latch down the cowling correctly. It's happened before, it'll happen again.

[00:38:30] IP: Yeah, this is not certainly not the first time this has happened. Jason.

[00:38:34] JR: Yo.

[00:38:35] IP: When we talk about airlines getting off the ground, we usually discuss where their funding is coming from by way of, there are major private equity backers, they were a different airline before and now they're getting new funding. They're taking over an existing airline. Happy Airways is trying to do something different. Happy Airways is trying to start up with two ATR-72-600s based in far eastern France, in Strasbourg.

What they want to do is begin operations through a variety of funding sources. That includes crowd funding, a lottery, and they are also hoping for some public funding, good, old tech –

[00:39:25] JR: I love public funding.

[00:39:26] IP: I think it's very interesting, because they're just coming out and saying, “Hey, we need money.” They say, “We need 5 million euros.” You can buy shares from 50 euros to 500,000 euros, including the possibility of getting a Happy unlimited pass. You get to fly as much as you want across the Happy Airways network. You can enter a lottery for two euros per ticket and the lottery gets you a trip to either the Bahamas, or a chance to win one of the Happy unlimited passes. Or you can be a city and you can pay the airline to fly to you.

[00:40:02] JR: No. Don't do any of that. No. None of that sounds like a good idea.

[00:40:07] IP: We will see how the airline fairs, or how happy airways fairs in the end.

[00:40:14] JR: Well, if you're investing in Happy Airways, I probably have some room just to squeeze you in to Baltia. They're probably still taking funding.

[00:40:25] IP: That's a deep cut. That goes back to episode one.

[00:40:28] JR: Are they still taking money?

[00:40:29] IP: No, no.

[00:40:30] JR: No, they're gone.

[00:40:31] IP: The government got wise and shut them down.

[00:40:34] JR: Ah, damn. It only took 30 years.

[00:40:35] IP: Yeah, yeah. For those that don't know, and I still want to do a full podcast episode on them at one point. I just need to collate all of the years of jokes that I've written and backfill that with actual research. Long story short, they were an airline that was going to fly a 747, from JFK to St. Petersburg, Russia. It was going to be this fantastically, wonderful, well-appointed 747, full service. It was going to be the best airline –

[00:41:05] JR: Good for 200.

[00:41:06] IP: 200. Yeah, that ever existed. The long story short, it was basically a stock scam masquerading as an airline.

[00:41:14] JR: But they actually had two airplanes.

[00:41:17] IP: Well.

[00:41:17] JR: Yeah, they did. Well, they had two and then they parted out one –

[00:41:20] IP: They had airframes. Yeah, they technically had –

[00:41:23] JR: They were flying airplanes. They flew one of them do an airshow, and then it was never seen again.

[00:41:27] IP: Yes, it flew once. That's correct. It was a very expensive stock scam masquerading as an airline, but that's what it was.

[00:41:35] JR: Those are the best kinds of stock scams, the expensive ones with 747s.

[00:41:39] IP: I mean, I guess if you're going to do it, do it all the way. Anyway, the first production 737-10 is painted in United colors. That is out, and we'll hopefully see more soon.

[00:41:51] JR: Hopefully, they don't have to scrap it.

[00:41:53] IP: To be beyond certification. Then two things. One, we go back to a few weeks ago, when Jason had a very – he was very perplexed.

[00:42:01] JR: I was. That's true.

[00:42:04] IP: And confounded. We asked you, dear listeners to give us some answers. We received a bunch thank you to everyone who sent in suppositions, or not quite guesses, but more educated than a guess, but not quite knowledge. Thankfully, someone at KLM heard the podcast and reached out to people at KLM who know about these things, and came back to us with an answer. Jason, what's the answer?

[00:42:30] JR: It is indeed that there are simply no hotels available for crew in anywhere in or around Doha. They're going to operate Amsterdam to Doha, and then shuttle out to DWC in Dubai, where there are available slots and runway timings and all that, because nobody else was there. That is where the crew will stay. Then they will swap out crews and then head back straight to Amsterdam. Indeed, Doha is just so severely limited on a hotel room that it is easier and probably cheaper somehow for KLM to fly from Doha to outside of Dubai to put up its crew, and then operate that flight back directly from Dubai. That's a couple extra cycles on the aircraft is apparently easier than finding a hotel in Doha during a World Cup.

[00:43:18] IP: I guess, I'm not surprised.

[00:43:20] JR: No. How much extra fuel burning cost will it be to operate those two extra unnecessary flights? Or, I guess, one extra flight, but then a slightly longer flight on the way back. It's got to be quite expensive.

[00:43:34] IP: I mean, it's less than the profit the airline is going to make from flying to Doha for the World Cup.

[00:43:40] JR: They got to figure it out somehow. This is it.

[00:43:42] IP: Yeah. Let's preview next week's episode by talking about something that happened this week. Jason, you were on Twitter. For those that don't know, Jason very rarely goes on Twitter. Jason, you were on Twitter. You were talking about the weather in New York mostly, and how it's affecting airline operations there and airport operations and mainly United. Someone reached out and said, "Well, it's a tough business." They said, "I'd be happy to explain it to you." We said, "Okay."

[00:44:15] JR: Yes. Please do that. We know it's a complicated situation. There was weather in the Northeast as there typically is in August. There was weather over Newark. There were FAA staffing issues, which compounded everything, and it was just total meltdown city at Newark, particularly for United where flights couldn't get out. Flights coming in had nowhere to go and they were busting the tarmac rules left and right, to the point where the United said, "Nope, we're done." They were diverting any flight inbound to Newark, either back to where they came, or elsewhere, like Doha. I think, there was a flight from San Diego that was over Utah already and they were sending it back all the way to San Diego, and that's particularly bad.

We will have some of them in the podcast to explain the intricacies of passenger airline dispatching and operations to break down how they got to that point and basically, what happens? What does a dispatcher do operationally on disaster days like that?

[00:45:15] IP: Yeah. It'd be a really good conversation. I'm looking very much forward to it, Mike from Flying in Life will be here. He is a dispatcher for a major US airline and will be here to fill us in on that. If you have questions for a dispatcher, wondering about certain things that you want answered, please email us, podcast@fr24.com, and we will be happy to ask.

In the meantime, this has been episode 178 of AvTalk. Thank you all so very much for listening. We hope you enjoyed last week's mini-episode and recap of one of our favorite conversations throughout the year so far. We're going to have a lot more great conversations throughout the

rest of the year. We've got some really fun stuff coming up that we'll preview a little bit more next week. Long story short, I'm about to do something probably very stupid, but is going to be a lot of fun. We'll talk about that next week.

[00:46:08] JR: The payoff will be rewarding.

[00:46:10] IP: The payoff will be very rewarding. We'll talk about all that next week. Until then, I am Ian Petchenik, here, as always with –

[00:46:18] JR: Jason Rabinowitz. Thanks for listening.

[END]