

THE GAME CHANGER

ONE FAMILY AND ITS BELOVED HOME COURSE IN NORTHEAST OHIO IMPROVED THE FACE OF GOLF »
ALSO: HOW A LEGACY MOTOR COMPANY IS REVOLUTIONIZING THE GREEN MOVEMENT FOR ITS CUSTOMERS



› AUGUST 01, 2013

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(Pg. 46)



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Work of Art

IT'S A RAINY AFTERNOON in downtown Dallas. Everything is moving slower than usual. We don't get too much rain down here, but when we do, it comes down hard and fast. And it wouldn't bother me so much except that over at DFW International Airport, it's delaying my flight. No matter: American's pilots put safety above all else. Plus, my weather delay allows me more time to stare at my ride as she sits there, pretty in the rain, outside the floor-to-ceiling windows of gate D25.

The new American Airlines color scheme is particularly striking against a gray sky. The red and blue on our American flag tail fin really shines against the melancholic rainy gloom. Inside, fluorescent airport lights quietly drone overhead, and people move from shop to restaurant while waiting out the rain. But not me. I'm perfectly content observing the silver bird that glistens in the rain. Once this shower passes, the new Boeing 777-300ER will take me across the country; then over eastern Canada; across the North Atlantic; around the Emerald Isle and gradually dip beneath the clouds as we make our descent into London Heathrow Airport.

Much hay has been made in aviation circles about the new 777-300ER. The plane is nothing less than an industry game changer, and, unsurprisingly, American was the first U.S. airline to take delivery of the revolutionary aircraft. The sleek design, which yields better fuel efficiency, literally invites you to take a closer look. That's exactly what I wanted to do. And that's why I strategically planned my trip to London around Flight 50.

Staring at the new plane through the windows inspired me to keep a journal of my eight-and-a-half-hour flight to London. After all, what better way to affirm or deny the hype than

to record my personal journey?

4:55 p.m.: Flight is delayed an hour due to weather. I watch the plane through the windows. I'm not alone: Many passersby in the D Terminal stop to admire the silver mica paint and new American livery.

5:30 p.m.: The sky clears over DFW, and the 777-300ER shimmers in front of a setting sun. We begin to board the plane and everyone, it seems, is excited to see if the interior is as pretty as the exterior.

5:45 p.m.: My first impression upon entering the 77W (as it's affectionately known) is akin to the first impression one gets when walking into a trendy hotel lobby (but this lobby has that new-plane smell). And there's some hip music playing, not the Muzak of yore. I catch the couple in front of me dancing as they wait to walk to their seats.

5:46 p.m.: I plop into seat 13A in Business Class, and I do mean "plop." There is so much room that I can stand straight up in the plane and not have to duck my head (and I'm 6'1") and then sit down all at once — without easing in.

6:15 p.m.: The plane pushes back and I can see passengers in Terminal D watching us. We are a striking sight in this 77W. We taxi down the runway, and as the pilots throttle up the gigantic GE90-115B engines, the plane gently hums. Take-off is gentle, quiet and ever-so-peaceful. We're above the clouds and soaring after what feels like only 20 minutes.

6:50 p.m.: It is safe to use approved electronic devices, so I'm stopping my old-school pencil-and-notepad note-taking and turning on the computer — and because every seat is equipped with a power outlet, I don't have to worry about

conserving batteries. I'm looking forward to using the international Wi-Fi, but not just yet.

6:51 p.m.: I look up to make sure that even though electronic devices can be used, people are still reading *American Way* and *Celebrated Living*. They are.

6:52 p.m.: I take the fully lie-flat seat for a spin. It's literally more comfortable than my bed back home. That bed cost me a lot of money.

7:17 p.m.: Dinner is served. I have the beef tenderloin. It's literally better than the steak I cook back home. Those steaks cost me a lot of money.

9 p.m.: I've been listening to music for almost two hours and looking out my window at America below. There are more than 350 audio selections on this thing, and Bose QuietComfort 15 Acoustic Noise Cancelling headphones. I'm buying a pair the second I get back home. The Black Crowes never sounded so good.

10:10 p.m.: I'm following our flight on the onboard GPS. We just crossed over the Canadian border into Ontario. I put on Bryan Adams — out of respect.

11 p.m.: I take a stroll around the plane to stretch my legs. I'm looking for someone to talk to (I never can fall asleep on planes), but everyone is sleeping soundly. So I go back to my seat, lie flat and cue up *Argo* on demand. I'm thoroughly happy.

7:30 a.m. London time: I wake up, headphones still on, flight attendant smiling over me as she passes me some biscuits. First time I can remember sleeping on a plane. And not just a couple minutes of garbage sleep, but full-blown REM sleep. My takeaway: This is the best plane in the world. I'll go out of my way to fly on it, and I even like the depiction of Tripp, the 777-inspired character in *Disney's Planes*. (For more on the movie, see "Vantage Point" on page 8 and our cover story on page 52.)

Do yourself a favor: Come rain or shine, book a seat on this bird.



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