

Just like on the gridiron, winning takes teamwork

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In football, each play is carefully plotted and is an important part in the overall strategy of the game. While the X's and O's on the gridiron are far different from the crew's playbook at 35,000 feet in the air, at their core, one thing is crucial to the success of both a game and a flight: teamwork.

Each year, American Airlines partners with professional and collegiate athletic teams to provide chartered flights for gameday. It's an incredibly detailed and tactical process, choreographed well ahead of time to ensure the teams make it to the game safely and on time. This thoughtful approach has earned American the privilege of serving as the charter airline of the Dallas Cowboys for the past three decades.

"The crew working charters for American has a lot of pride. Charters are unique, and crew members are involved in every detail, even down to making sure there is enough water on the plane for players and crew." – Capt. Bill Peterson, a Boeing 777 captain who has been flying the Cowboys for 10 years.

Bill, along with Charter Planner Michael Stejskal and Tammy Walker, American's Charter Coordinator for the Dallas Cowboys, carefully reviews the game plan and collaborates with each department, station and crew member that will be a part of the flight to ensure the charter's success. That's the winning formula.

Every element of a charter flight is always handled with extra care but, with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the crews have taken this attention to detail to a new level. Flight attendants and a COVID Compliance coordinator for charters make sure all health and safety regulations are met. These guidelines include ensuring players and all others onboard wear a face covering, practice social distancing when boarding and deplaning, and that the aircraft has been thoroughly sanitized prior to the flight. Like all aircraft American flies, the airline's multifaceted **Clean Commitment** ensures clean planes with clean air for all onboard.

Pandemic or not, there is one thing that has not changed. “The players’ privacy is so important,” Tammy said. “The crew always does a great job of respecting players’ space and their privacy. The team can rest and prepare for the game on the outbound, then review the tape and relax on the way back.”

There are two pilots and 10 flight attendants, a charter coordinator, a COVID Compliance coordinator and a Ground Operations coordinator working each charter on the 777 aircraft this season for the Dallas Cowboys. Tammy said her charter crew teammates have become lifelong friends.

“We really have developed lasting friendships and a close bond after working together after all of these years,” she said. “We’ve been through all of the highs and lows with the team, and everything in between. We know we can count on each other to go the extra mile to get the job done and deliver a quality product.”

The Cowboys play each year on Thanksgiving, a league tradition. Even though they aren’t flying to their game this holiday, the Cowboys are still top of mind.

“The biggest question I get is, what are they like when they lose?” Bill said.

The Cowboys charter team is committed to the game plan and respect each player’s privacy, past or present. Fortunately, Bill did share one nugget for the Cowboys faithful, “After winning, Tony Romo used to blast country western music on his boom box after wins.” There also might be some playful sarcasm amongst opposing airport stations, but we’ll leave that to your imagination.

“A lot of people ask me what the players and coaches are like on the plane,” Tammy added. “I tell them they are real people, just like you and me. They really are so personable and down to earth, everyone from the Jones family to the players and support staff.”

Bill, Tammy and crew aren’t in it for the spotlight. They are proud to be part of the charter team that plays an instrumental role in the careful planning of each flight to help set up the Cowboys for success. From pre-charter conference calls to reviewing safety measures and enforcing privacy protection or coordinating specialized catering, all details matter, and all plays are connected in this special way American is caring for people on life’s journey.

Capt. Bill Peterson deplaning prior to kick-off.

Tammy Walker alongside crew members in advance of a chartered flight.