50th Boeing 737 for Virgin Blue Is Truly Blue

The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] and Virgin Blue Airlines today celebrated the delivery of the airline's 50th Next-Generation 737, sporting a special 'true blue' livery. The new jetliner, a 737-700, departs for its Australian home tomorrow.

The sterling blue paint scheme, instead of the usual vivid red livery, will serve as a flying billboard for the airline's success in the Australian domestic market. The interior stowage bins also carry the names of all staff members, from founder Sir Richard Branson, and CEO Brett Godfrey, to 'pit crew' ground staff, cabin crew and support services.

Brisbane, Queensland, based Virgin Blue is taking the 50th jetliner less than five years from start of Australian domestic service. The airline's stellar growth reached 40 percent in the year ending March 31, resulting in a profit after tax of $A138 million on revenues of $1.6 billion.

"Virgin Blue has charted its own path to achieve operational and economic success by offering low fares combined with exceptional service for its Australian and south Pacific customers," said Larry Dickenson, vice president, Sales -- Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "We have been proud to be a partner on this journey, and delighted to see the airline's tremendous success. Virgin Blue's recent win as Best Low Cost Carrier at the OAG Airline of the Year awards is positive proof that it has the right recipe."

The airline's fleet is a mix of 737-700s and 737-800s, running a route network stretching from Darwin in northern Australia , to Perth in the West, Hobart in the South as well as high-frequency East Coast services between Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.

Now 62.4 percent owned by the Patrick Corporation, Virgin Blue also runs international services from Australia to New Zealand under the Pacific Blue brand, and recently acquired the right to operate Polynesian Airlines, national carrier of Western Samoa.

The Next-Generation 737 family delivers high profitability, optimum efficiency and reliability, and is 10 years newer that its competition. It is the fastest-selling jetliner of all time and the class leader in dispatch reliability. Boeing has received orders for more than 2,700 Next-Generation 737s since launching the program in 1993, with unfilled orders for more than 980 planes.

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