

Basauri Happy to be Back

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It's been on again, off again for Inaki Basauri, but right now he's looking at on-again.

The former Maryland Exiles U19, who first put on a USA jersey in 2003 for the USA U19s, Basauri was the starting openside flanker for the Eagles through much of the 2007 World Cup. He wasn't selected in 2008 until the tour of Japan at the end of the year, and then once again wasn't in the Eagles fold until late 2010.

In that tour he played his way into a starting position, only to leave the game against Georgia with a shoulder injury that has kept him off the rugby field since. Now he's back, and hoping once again to break into the starting USA lineup.

"They did a really great surgery on me and I am back to my playing weight and hoping to put on some more KGs," Basauri told RUGBYMag.com.

The flanker was out for six months, told by doctors to avoid contact he returned to his club, L'Aquila in Italy, long enough to help recruit his replacement, Eagle No. 8 Nic Johnson. Then he switched to California for rehab and training.

"Six months is a long time and I'm just extremely happy to be healthy again and back with the team," he said. "It felt good to be back with the team. It's a shame I got hurt, I hadn't got hurt for a while and these things happen in rugby, but in a way I was glad that at least it was in a big game."

Basauri is a bit of an anomaly in the USA lineup in that he's more of a pure back row than most of the other squad. He can cover the field and is good in the air, making up for a slight lack in bulk with work rate.

"I can bring my energy to the team," Basauri explained. "I just want to do what I do. Play my

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game as a defensive player. I just love playing rugby and I am happy to be palying again and back with my friends.”