As common a word as “scrum” in assessing the prospects for the USA team in any international, is the word “goalkicking.”

True, some would say that’s two words, but here in America we like to make one word out of things like kickoffs, lineouts, and goalkickers.

For the Eagles, their goalkicker Nese Malifa knows there’s a lot of pressure on him, especially as Russia flyhalf Yury Kushnarev is outstanding in that regard. Certainly Russia will be able to net points (especially if the Eagles keep committing penalties).

But Malifa, who has been working hard with USA kicking coach Chris O’Brien, is feeling confident.

“This is the best I’ve been kicking in a very long time,” the flyhalf told RUGBYMag.com. “I’ve been striking the ball very well.”

Malifa and O’Brien have been poring over videos of his kicking, working on his fundamentals and his approach to the ball.

“I want to be doing them consistently,” he explained. “Against Tonga, I missed that first kick. There was some wind. I normally, if I am kicking from the right side, aim for the left post, and if I am kicking from the left side, I aim for the right post. The wind kept changing, and I had to adjust after that one.”

Still, Malifa notched a nicely-taken penalty later that half, and a touchline conversion that, at the time, seemed critical.

“Consistency is the key,” he said.

And if you look closely, you may well see Malifa talking to himself while he sets up his kicks. The flyhalf admits that is exactly what he is doing.

“I am just reminding myself of the basics: head down, follow through, shoulders in.”