A little over a year ago, the All Americans played three games in California against a touring New Zealand team.

Almost the entire team was made up of DI-A and DI-AA rugby players, most of them from well-known colleges. And yet, one of the best players during the assembly, and certainly one of the most dependable, was Zach Fenoglio from DII Loyola Marymount.

Fenoglio plays hooker and prop, and after a season helping Belmont Shore win a national club title, is now not only playing for the Glendale Raptors, he is their captain. Friday he will pack down at tighthead prop for the USA Selects against Argentina – a massive challenge for the youngster, who joins fellow All Americans Derek Asbun and Nick Wallace in the front row (in fact, six of the eight USA Selects forwards are former All Americans).

“The assembly’s been great,” Fenoglio told RUGBYMag.com. “In San Francisco, the early days were pretty intense. They were definitely high-intensity. The scrum’s been going well. We’ve had Luke Gross and Dan Payne and Gavin Hickie all working with the forwards, and Coach Tolkin cares a lot about that too. We have a lot of respect for the teams we’re going to go up against, so we’re working hard at it.”

Fenoglio said he liked the approach the coaches had about scrum preparation – a lot of work, but not too much. Work on form, then pack down, then study film of the session, then back out to correct it. Nothing done so much you get diminishing returns.

What the USA program gets out of this assembly will be hard to measure after just one game, but the idea of getting a group of young players with international aspirations together and testing them will one day create better Eagles.

All the players know this, said Fenoglio, and they also know that just worrying about your own prospects is the wrong road to follow.

“Everyone wants to make it to the main USA side, but I don’t think anyone here is focusing mainly on himself. If that is your focus, your true colors will show, and not in a good way. Coach Tolkin has said he’s not just looking for the best players, but the best team, and that’s the attitude we have.

“It’s an incredible honor to be selected,” Fenoglio added. “Any time you get the opportunity to wear the United States on your chest, it’s an incredible honor. That’s why we play the game. And it’s great to be able to do it with such a great group of guys.”