Written by Alex Goff
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The USA women's national team may have lost to France 13-0 and 27-3 in short order, but there are reasons to feel optimistic about what this team can do, said their coach Pete Steinberg.

Namely, the USA forwards were very strong against the French and the team as a whole showed excellent fitness as they were able to play two games in four days.

But, as one French coach told Steinberg, "your team likes to train; my team likes to play."

The USA had a slim majority in possession and territory, and certainly had the upper hand, albeit a slight one, in the forwards. Perhaps, then, the scoreline flattered France, but it was the USA’s own fault as they failed to turn all that possession into points.

"We can physically compete at this level," said Steinberg. "Our forwards probably had a slight edge on France. But we're not yet good enough rugby players to take the ball we won and turn that into tries. In fact, we had a tendency to even slow our own ball down."

Steinberg said the absence of a couple of USA 7s team players was partly a factor in his team's attacking issues, and another is a breakdown in basic skills among players who aren't required in their domestic competition to execute skills under pressure. But he also pointed the finger at himself.

"We have to do a better job of coaching the team in using possession and playing past the gain line," he said.

The skills issue was a concern, as far too many US attacks would go two or three passes and then see the ball dropped.

One of the USA's issues is the schedule, long- and short-term.

Short-term, the Eagles played Italy on Sunday November 18, then France on Wednesday, November 21, and then France against on November 24.

As a result, all of their work had to be done in the week building up to Italy. After that game, the Eagles had only two light training days on which to work on things.

"We had a choice, either play on Sunday, or play in Stade de France, so we decided it was a great opportunity to play in Stade de France," said Steinberg. "But it was difficult to build through the tour."

Long-term, the USA needs more games. While this was the USA's third game of the year - all played in a week - France had their Six Nations, plus other matches, and were very seasoned.

"We will be taking a look at how we get more high-level games for the players," said Steinberg, who is keenly aware that the 2014 World Cup isn't that far away. "I think we did do some good things here. We definitely need to establish our own style. We can't out-New Zealand New Zealand, and we can't out-France France. But we have the foundation for a really good team. We just need to use that possession better."