The USA U20s showed they can score from pretty much anywhere during their five-try loss against Russia Saturday.

But their problem was, they had to score from anywhere. Russia played most of the game in the USA end, and that, in the end, was the difference. Both teams scored five tries and converted four. Russia got two more penalty kicks that the Eagles because of that pressure.

“The important part was how we ended up in our own territory,” explained USA U20 Head Coach Scott Lawrence. “Eleven of our 21 turnovers came from restarts or set pieces. When you play at this level there are critical elements of the game you have to get right. You need to win your own kick, win your own scrum ball, and when there’s an uncontested lineout ball, you need to jump up and catch it.”

That the U20s did not do, and coupled with poor defense around the fringes of the rugby caused problems for the Americans. The pillar defense, at times, just wasn’t there, and Russia was only too glad to pick-and-drive, or run a one-ball to a back or forward. Nothing fancy, just straight-ahead rugby, but the Eagles didn’t not stop it well enough.

“Our turnover attack was good,” said Lawrence. “We played a lot of scramble defense. But I don’t think the players came into camp with a clear understanding of the basics of interior defense. We gave up 16 lines breaks, and 14 of them were on the interior. I think that’s a pretty telling tale.”

Missed tackles, missed assignments, and players slow to their position all contributed.

So the evening after the Russia game, Lawrence had a come to Jesus meeting with the

players, pointing out that Uruguay won't be all that different. The USA has shown they are athletic and exciting with the ball. It's what they do without the ball that needs help.

"The thing about these sides we play is that a lot of them are from just two or three clubs and spend an enormous amount of time together," said Lawrence. "As a result they have a lot of continuity. They commit numbers to the tackle contest, they get to the breakdown, and they wear you down. We know how Uruguay is going to attack. It will be a good challenge for us."

The USA team has an intense couple of days training and studying film before facing Uruguay. Their coach wants them to learn these lessons, even when it's tough to see.

"Some of these kids don't understand yet that to be an international player it takes a 365-day commitment," Lawrence said. "It's this learning process that is as much the development of players as anything else."