It's that other thing.

As I sat, rapt, listening to Bruce McLane discuss on our latest RuggaMatrix Podcast, I had a hard time disagreeing with the man. And Lord knows, that's usually an easy state of mind to be in (in disagreement with Bruce). This time?

Well let me tell you what Bruce said. He said that the Churchill Cup should be approached as a competition the USA team wants to win. The Eagles, said McLane, should run out their very best available team in order to beat the England Saxons, and in fact should run out their best available team in every game this summer.

That part I didn't necessarily agree with - there are reasons for changing the lineup. But what I did agree with was this: whether Eagle coach Eddie O'Sullivan agrees with McLane will be illsutrated by his lineup choice. And he was right, because it is clear - O'Sullivan doesn't think you run your best 15 out there regardless.

Now this isn't to run down any of the players involved in Saturday's Saxons match. In fact, I think they are all good enough to do the job against the Saxons and win the game. But it's not the bext 15.

This is illustrated by the fact Shawn Pittman is not starting at prop, Todd Clever isn't even in the 22 at loose forward, and neither is Nic Johnsoon. Troy Hall is at flyhalf, not Nese Malifa. And Kevin Swiryn and Andrew Suniula are also not in the starting lineup.

Once again, thats not to run down who is in the lineup, but we know who O'Sullivan has been favoring of late, and we know which players are in good form at pro clubs.

But ... I don't hate this team because we have to find out some things, and we might as well

find it all out now.

Such as:
1. Is Mike Palefau the answer at to back up Chris Wyles at fullback, and if not, is Colin Hawley? Put them both out there and see.

2. Is Junior Sifa back in the former he showed in 2010? And while we know Tai Enosa is a good attacking player, can he defend against a tough opponent?

3. Is Troy Hall the answer as a backup at flyhalf to Nese Malifa?

4. Can Mile Pulu play wing?

5. What progress have Eric Fry and Will Johnson made? (In this position I think there's the highest likelihood of a player playing his way onto the starting squad v. Tonga on Wednesday.)

6. We know Todd Clever, Nic Johnson, Samu Manoa, Lou Stanfill and Scott LaValla are on the inside track at flanker for the Eagles. But where is Pat Danahy, he of the up-and-down form? Is Danny LePrevotte able to take the #7 jersey with both hands? Can JJ Gagiano do the same? OK, let's put them all out there, along with back-from-injury Inaki Basauri on the subs bench, and watch them fight it out.

All of those questions need to be answered, and while I don't like the USA having to test these things out in a major international, they have to be dealt with at some point. What I do like is that it seems the questions won't be tested piecemeal through the season. O'Sullivan wants to know the answers now.

USA EAGLES TO FACE ENGLAND SAXONS
15 Mike Palefau (Utah Warriors)
14 Mile Pulu (San Francisco Golden Gate)
13 Tai Enosa (Belmont Shore)
12 Junior Sifa (Nottingham RFC)
11 Colin Hawley (Olympic Club)
10 Troy Hall (New York Athletic Club)
9 Mike Petri (New York Athletic Club, captain)
1 Eric Fry (Las Vegas Blackjacks)
2 Phil Thiel (Life University)
3 Will Johnson (London Irish)
4 John van der Giessen (Utah Warriors)
5 Scott LaValla (Stade Francais)
6 Pat Danahy (Life University)
7 Danny LaPrevotte (San Francisco Golden Gate)
8 JJ Gagiano (Univ. of Cape Town)

Reserves:
16 Chris Biller (San Francisco Golden Gate)

17 Shawn Pittman (London Welsh)
18 Louis Stanfill (Mogliano)
19 Inaki Basauri (L' Aquila)
20 Tim Usasz (Nottingham RFC)
21 Roland Suniula (Boston Rugby)
22 Andrew Suniula (Chicago Griffins)

Players not in the 22:
Todd Clever
Nic Johnson
Mike MacDonald
Paul Emerick
Nese Malifa
Kevin Swiryn
Zack Test