

## Eagle Eye: Pieces There for US 7s Team?

Written by Alex Goff

Tuesday, 20 November 2012 20:56

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So what do we want in our USA 7s team?

**We need good decision-making.** At the heart of the Alex Magleby's squad with this in mind is captain Shalom Suniula and Folau Niu. Both players are experienced, Suniula much more than Niu. Both have excellent skills – Niu can kick with both feet (not at the same time), which is a nice wrinkle to throw into the restart scenario. And both players can take a risk, which is an aspect play we really need. Add to this pair Nate Augspurger, who is going to see less time than the other two, but who is fit and aggressive.



Augspurger's presence means Suniula can play both scrumhalf and flyhalf, and that gives the team versatility in its decision-making. Mike Te'o could play anywhere, but certainly can be a good scrumhalf.

**We need speed.** This team has some speed in Carlin Isles and Maka Unufe, but it is not as loaded with speedy guys as the last squad, which also had Rocco Mauer and Luke Hume. Why is this? It could be that Isles and Unufe have shown, with their fitness, that they can handle more of the game. It could be that, or more likely Magleby looked at who he had, and he made his choice based on the players he had available.

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So instead of pure speed, he's got speed and physicality. That's where Nick Edwards comes in. Edwards is quick, but more than that he's the kind of player who breaks tackles.

Jack Halalilo, who can play almost anywhere in the backline, is another tackle breaker, not a guy with pure jets like Isles.

**We need strength in contact.** Certainly there's that. Leading the way is Matt Hawkins and Zack Test, both players we expect to step up their game in Dubai, but Brett Thompson, Mike Te'o, Halalilo and Unufe are all getting a better handle on what it takes to dominate the point of contact in World Series 7s.

**We need versatility.** Injuries happen on the circuit, especially in the second week. You can't have more than one or two players who are only wings or only props. You need players who can fill in anywhere. Te'o is that kind of player. With his strong, compact body, he can handle himself at hooker, or scrumhalf, or center. Colin Hawley is a player like that, although he is built completely differently. Hawley has the pace to score long-range tries, so we could have listed him in the speed category. He has a wiry strength that works well in the forwards, and he could slot in at flyhalf if need be. That kind of player is hugely valuable.

**We need to win in the air.** We've been talking a lot lately about the USA's ability to catch restarts in the air and the many players who can do that, but we need the timing to be right, and the ball to actually fall into USA hands. That leads us to ...

**We need execution.** The pieces are there, certainly, but they don't matter at all if they don't do the job. The Eagles cannot afford to miss tackles. They cannot afford to drop balls or lose them in contact. They have to make those decisions – including pulling away from contact when there's no support, finding the open players when there's a mismatch, and backing themselves. They have to get the restarts right, and kick conversions.

And to do that, they need to play with confidence

The USA will face Australia in their opening match November 30 (the evening of November 29 in the USA), followed by France and then Canada. Despite the rough times the Americans have had in the World Series of late, this is actually a pool they can win. They have the pieces right there on the field to do it. That one last piece – execution – is the wild card.

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