



On the eve of the Eagles Churchill Cup finale with Russia, RUGBYMag.com's Pat Clifton touched base with Eagle center Paul Emerick. Looking to play in his third World Cup this fall, Emerick is slotted to start at outside center for the USA Saturday.

PC: How's the team morale coming off the tough Saxons and Tonga losses?

Emerick: Needless to say the first couple performances were pretty rough. We've had a little over a week to get things right and we've been putting the time in on the field, with some long days and a couple double days, and we're looking forward to not only play like we know how to play but to try and pick up a win as well.

PC: You've been an Eagle for some time now, was that Saxons/Tonga stretch over the course of four days the toughest you've been through?

Emerick: They seem to do that to us every World Cup year. They did it to us in '03, they did it to us in '07 and they're going to do it to us in this upcoming one. It's nothing new to me, and also playing with a couple club teams in Wales, we've done the whole three games in eight days, but it's just tough. It's a tough turnaround, so you try and manage the guys and try and keep them fresh.

PC: What has been your mantra this past week, what have you been focusing on since Tonga?

Emerick: We've just got to get guys in the right places and organized a little bit better and stick with our systems, because when we're executing our game plan we look pretty good. When we're off our game plan and guys are kind of off doing their own thing, they're not in the defensive line or whatever, then it looks pretty bad, so the mantra's been all about defensively staying in our line, making our first-up tackles and playing the pattern that Eddie's got laid out

Q&A With Paul Emerick

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for us.

PC: After the way you guys lost to the Saxons and Tonga, is anybody freaking out?

Emerick: Everyone's kind of feeling pressure, because this is pretty much one of the last looks you're going to get before the World Cup squad is decided, and we're missing some players from overseas, so it's important not only that you play well, but that you also play within Eddie's systems. No one's freaking out, and we're just trying to do our best to get things done.

PC: As a veteran who's been to a pair of World Cups, are some of the younger guys who are trying to get to their first coming to you for advice?

Emerick: It's been happening to me more and more, guys who are just graduating college or a year or two out of college, and just kind of asking about how I got overseas and the kind of trials and tribulations I went through, and I'm here to give advice, but I think each person's situation is a little bit unique and different, but I try and help out as much as I can, definitely.

PC: For those of you that came straight from sevens, your last 11 games in a USA uniform has been a loss. Is that weighing down on you, or are you able to separate the 7s losses from 15s losses?

Emerick: The London/Scotland sevens, man. If you looked at it on paper you would think we'd have one of the best squads assembled we've had in a long time, and we just didn't jell, and it's pretty unfortunate to finish the 7s season with an 0-5 appearance in Scotland, but we had some close games. Apart from that Scotland games we played all the rest of the games were within a score and two of them we got beat in the last 30 seconds in the game, but tough losses to swallow.

I thought the Tonga game we really underperformed, 10-13 at half and then we gave up some soft tries and we coughed the ball up twice when we were knocking on the goal line. We were definitely in that game and take our lessons learned from it, and we're all looking forward to giving Russia a run and getting a W.

PC: How does the fact that you're playing Russia for the second time in roughly a year, and the third time will come in just a few months in the World Cup, affect your preparation for Saturday?

Emerick: Me personally, it's not changing my approach. I'm going to run hard and make my tackles and execute my part in the game plan, and as far as the team game plan and Eddie and that goes, we just need to get a basic game plan executed, and once we get that going we can start putting in wrinkles and feeling comfortable to deviate from it and be a bit more just playing rugby rather than just playing a very strict plan. We've got to get the basic patterns down before we can really start playing some expansive rugby and stuff, so that's what we're doing right now.