Robbie Shaw entered 2008 feeling full of optimism. The scrumhalf, who qualified for the USA through his American mother, looked to be poised to break in as one of the Eagles #9s.

Shaw did that, starting against Ireland A and Canada, but after that he was on the outside looking in. That November, Shaw was made captain of the USA Selects that played the New Zealand Heartland XV, but that meant he didn't get to play in the test match against Uruguay, and he did not accompany the team on its tour of Japan, either.

Not picked by Eddie O'Sullivan in 2009, Shaw then injured his knee, and worked long and hard to get back on the field for Bristol in England.

Now Shaw has his shot. He is healthy and has been playing well, and he has been named as the third scrumhalf in Eddie O'Sullivan's 36-man squad to take on Canada in August.

"It's been a long time," said Shaw. "All I can do now is hope I get a chance to show what I can do on the field and hopefully make a big impact."

Shaw said his biggest jobs will be to assimilate quickly into the team culture, and to learn everything he can about the team's pattern of play.

"I have got to fit into the pattern, and I will talk to the coaches and work hard to make sure I have the moves and the calls down," Shaw told RUGBYmag.com. "Then all I can hope to do is train as hard as possible, be a part of the team, and hope I get the opportunity."

Currently Shaw is training with the Scarlets of Llanelli, Wales in the newly-named Pro 12 (formerly Magners League). The Scarlets are looking for cover during the World Cup, but Shaw will still be leaving that training camp to join the Eagles.

"It's been the perfect buildup for me," Shaw said. "I have really enjoyed it here, and I get to work with people such as Simon Easterby, who played for Eddie O'Sullivan with Ireland."

Easterby also played alongside current USA assistant coach Dave Hodges at Llanelli, where the former USA captain is held in very high esteem.

"Dave Hodges is one of those players who made such a good impression that it's become a little easier for Americans to play professionally," said Shaw. "Everyone here talks about what a strong player he was."

Shaw is also looking forward to reuniting with players on the Eagles. He has played with flyhalf Nese Malifa (in fact, he's played with his brothers Ata and Angelo as well), and with Todd Clever and Lou Stanfill. He is good friends with fellow USA scrumhalf Mike Petri. But he had special words for Scott LaValla, who was also on that USA Selects team in 2008.

"It's tremendous to see Scott grow so much," said Shaw. "From a young player just starting out to a professional at Stade Francais – I think it's great."