At the beginning of the USA Men's National 15s team's 2012 campaign, Head Coach Mike Tolkin told RUGBYMag.com, quietly, that his team was going to go after defenses.

His Eagles, Tolkin said, would not sit back and hope to not lose a close game. On the whole, that seemed to be the Eagle approach, but it really came to fruition Saturday against Romania, when the Americans dominated the Oaks in Bucharest 34-3.

"The guys were really excited about the approach and in fact I think we went wide too much too early," said Tolkin. "They have bought into the system that coach Tony Smeeth has put in. We're going to take if forward once or twice, and then go outside. When we did that, we really made something happen."

With a deep three of Chris Wyles, Taku Ngwenya and Luke Hume, the Eagles had weapons on the perimeter, and the USA coaching staff wanted to use them. Those three were often seen slotting in at midfield, or even on the opposite wing. The result was that inside center Andrew Suniula scored a try on the wing. Outside center Paul Emerick scored a try when Hume, in midfield, popped a pass back inside to him.

Fullback Wyles scored a try on the wing, and then added another slotting in the line, while Ngwenya finally got some space to move, and made several important runs before scoring his long-range try.

None of that would have been possible without some superb work from the forward pack. Every single player knew he had to get to those breakdowns quickly, and so did scrumhalf Mike Petri.

All of them did the job.

Tolkin mentioned three:

“Scott LaValla has really come along and has become a big leader on this team,” Tolkin said. “Todd Clever is a great captain but Scott is also a leader. Lou Stanfill came in for some criticism after the last game, but I thought he had a great game, and is really fitting in to the role we need him to take. He played an outstanding game. And Chris Biller is another guy who has been criticized, but he played really well. His lineout throwing has been really accurate, and it’s from the lineout that we launch a lot of our attack.”

Indeed the lineout was excellent, but perhaps the big set piece was the scrum. Romania had the stronger scrum, but the USA hung in there, were solid enough, and scored a try from that platform at the end of the first half.

“Reporters in Romania kept asking me if I feared the Romanian scrum,” said Tolkin. “I know what Dan Payne and Derek Dowling had been doing with the scrum. I knew we could get a solid platform, so I just said I respected the Romanian scrum and left it at that.”

Overall, it was an excellent culmination of what turned out to be a pretty good year for the USA men. They won three games, and lost three. All three of the losses were competitive, with two certainly winnable had one or two things gone their way. They moved up in the rankings, and, they won a game against a relatively equal opponent comprehensively.

“I was really pleased,” said Tolkin. “The guys executed well. They embraced the plan we had, and kept their defensive shape. We didn’t have a let-down when the subs came on, and we pretty much controlled territory and possession. I know the guys fell really good, and we feel good about where we are going.”

What the new approach on offense has done also is allow good players the chance to show how good they are. Wyles, who has probably been better for Saracens than the USA in the last two years, has played extremely well this year, and that’s in part because he is given the opportunity to be more involved in the attack.

Mike Petri and Robbie Shaw both played well this tour, giving the USA depth at scrumhalf. Toby L’Estrange, given a chance to be secure at the flyhalf position, continued to get better and may have locked up that sport for the foreseeable future. Depth remains a question, especially in the backline, but don’t forget that James Paterson, Blaine Scully, and several college players were not able to be on this tour.

Get Ngwenya available more often and Samu Manoa on this squad and you’ve got a USA team many other countries won’t enjoy facing.