The USA played a very competitive first half in their Edinburgh 7s opener, doing a good job of turning Samoa over on their first possession, but they promptly kicked it back to the defending World Series champs, who scored immediately, punishing the puzzling decision to give them more possession.

The Eagles reined in the ensuing kickoff, and Paul Emerick slices through the first line of Samoan defense, dragging his tackler a few meters before going down. Nese Malifa then stepped past a pair of defenders, creating an overlap that would see Matt Hawkins race in for a score on the sideline.

Only a conversion now separated the Eagles, who trailed 7-5.

A pesky defense had Samoa uncomfortable. The Eagles were annoying Samoa at the breakdown and disturbing their offensive rhythm, but a pair of offside calls, one against Emerick and one against Hawkins, both during counter-ruck situations, put Samoa through for its second try in the eighth minute.

14-5 Samoa at halftime.

After an impressive opening period, the Americans started poorly in the second half, mishandling their first three touches. The first two resulted in knocks, and the third, which came after Paul Emerick did well to hold up a Samoan scrum deep in the American end, was a slapped out-pass by scrumhalf Shalom Suniula that led to Samoa's third touch down and a 21-5 lead.

On the next possession, Emerick kept up the aggression by charging through the gate on

defense to claim a ball that had poked through the back of a Samoan ruck. He carried it inside the Samoan 22, then floated it to a charging Roland Suniula. A Samoan defender scrambled to make a bid for the pass, knocking it backward, but Suniula scooped it up and, carried in the Eagles' second try, pulling them closer at 21-12.

The score, however, came too late, and the defending circuit champs staved off the potential comeback, winning 21-12.

Outside of the opening three minutes of the second half, the Americans played well. There were a couple mistakes in the first half, the ill-advised kick and a knock, but those were surmountable. Emerick was the sparkplug of the Eagles effort.

It doesn't get much easier for the Eagles now, as Fiji awaits them in game two.