The last few interviews Matt Hawkins has given RUGBYMag.com and RUGBY Magazine have been as a coach.

Hawkins signed on to coach San Diego State, which finished second in DI-AA, and he coached the Old Aztecs 7s team, which qualified for the National Championships tournament, finishing a respectable 7th, and then he led the Marine Corps 7s team to an Armed Forces title.

It seemed, with that level of success, he might have made a big change in his rugby life.

So when we heard Hawkins was back in camp with the USA team, we almost dismissed it. He's back? Yes, as a player, he's back.

"After Vegas last season is was time for me to walk away," Hawkins told RUGBYMag.com. "I had some choices to make. I was working with Serevi and coaching and spending more time with my family, and it was just the right thing for me. But I never left the game, and after some time away I spoke with Alex Magleby and told him, 'look, I'd love to come back.' I realized I was not done."

At 29 Hawkins is one of the most experienced USA 7s players. He set the all-time record for most IRB World Series events by an Eagle last year at 28. That mark has since been tied and passed by Shalom Suniula. With that experience comes a renewed commitment to serve as a

mentor.

"I have always thought of myself in that role," Hawkins said. "Working with guys like Colin Hawley and Zack Test, I remember when they were first coming into the side. Now they are veterans. I am happy to help in that way, and I enjoy doing it. If it is within my power to help a younger player be better, I will do that. It doesn't change how I approach the game."

How he approaches the game is very direct. Hawkins will get go-forward. He will hit rucks hard. He has good passing skills, and above all, he can scrum.

"Over the past few years the USA has been the best scrummaging team on the circuit," said Coach Magleby. "And Matt has been central to that."

He expects to be central to that aspect of play again.

"The scrum, if done right, is a huge asset," he explained. "I take a lot of pride in how we scrum. I don't think I've lost a scrum yet and I don't plan on losing it. I just look at it that I want to win ball in such a way that our fast guys can get space and score."

That sounds like a plan.

Perhaps it's the same Matt Hawkins suiting up for the USA this season, or perhaps it's a slightly different one. Having been on the coaching side, and been on the sidelines, he has seen the game from a different perspective. A direct player, he's back with the USA team for two very simple and direct reasons – because Magleby needs him, and, as Hawkins said, "I want to play."