The Eagles opened the South African leg of the IRB 7s Series with a 26-12 loss to Portugal Saturday. They dug themselves a 21-point deficit in the first half that proved too big to overcome.

Portugal got on the board first when the USA gave the ball up after an out pass from a ruck deep in their own end sailed over the first receiver's head. Portugal won possession at the ensuing ruck. Francisco Vieira De Almeida picked the ball up from the base of the contact area and danced in without being forced to make a pass. Pedro Leal converted.

The Eagles got possession back after the restart, and put the ball through several passes without gaining much territory, until a poor Maka Unufe pass hit the ground. Portugal gathered the ball, and Goncalo Foro ran almost untouched for a try. Leal again converted, making it 14-0 to Portugal.

They extended the lead to 21-0 just before the half, scoring off of a penalty play deep inside American territory with Frederico Oliveira catching an offload from Leal. The scrumhalf hit his third conversion to extend the lead to 21-0 going into intermission.

Luke Hume and Carlin Isles came on in the second half, giving the Eagles some desperately needed speed. Even when the starting lineup managed to string together passes without fumbling possession away, they didn't seem to have anyone who could challenge the defense.

On Hume's first touch, he fended a Portugal defender, broke the gainline and offloaded to Folau Niua, who took it the rest of the way for a try. The conversion was missed, leaving the Eagles still down by three scores.

Unufe was the beneficiary of Hume's next touch. The Eagles spun the ball wide and Hume held onto it long enough to draw the attention of Unufe's defender. Then he passed, and Unufe had the speed to finish off the second USA score under the posts. Niua hit the conversion, narrowing the gap to 21-12 with about four minutes to play.

It looked as though the Eagles had another scoring opportunity when Isles got the ball on the perimeter with one man to beat, but the speedster didn't back himself on the edge, and instead slowed down to turn back inside. Portugal hauled him in and turned the ball over.

After it became apparent there wasn't enough time for the USA to come back and Portugal was awarded a penalty deep in the American end, Portugal teased up the final score line with no time left on the clock with a Joao Lino try.

The Eagles try to win their first pool match of the season at 8:56 a.m. ET against Canada.

Portugal 26
Tries: Oliveira, De Almeida, Foro, Lino
Conversions: Leal 3

USA 12
Tries: Niua, Unufe
Conversions: Niua