Do the Eagle men have a shot at the World Cup?

Well, it's going to be enormously difficult. It's unlikely anyone would pick them to win it (although, judging from 2009 when Kenya, Argentina, Samoa and Wales made the semis and New Zealand, South Africa, and England did not, it's possible). However, let's look at the possibility of making the Cup Quarterfinals, and therefore a top 8 spot.



They are slim, and here's why. With six pools in the RWC 7s, the quarterfinalists will be the pool winners and the two best second-place teams.

The USA has never beaten New Zealand, who is in their pool. So put aside for a moment the need to beat Georgia and Canada – they are not favored to beat New Zealand despite how close they have been of late.

So if they finish 2-1, they will have to post a better points difference that the teams in Pool C (Samoa, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Philippines), and Pool A (Australia, France, Spain, Tunisia) to give just two examples. While Georgia and Canada are beatable, are they the type that could be blown out by large scores?

Is Pressure on or Pressure off at 7s WC?

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Highly unlikely.

But, if the USA is to do this, they need to use all of their skills. The team that started playing good support rugby, made their tackles, and took chances when a gap opened up – this is the team that can score tries.

The same team we lamented in April for being a 2.4-try team averaged over three tries a game in their last 18 matches. What they need to do now is ramp that up – four tries against Canada, three against New Zealand, and eight or nine against Georgia.

No nervous ticks, no edgy quick-taps that end up in dropped balls, no yellow cards. They need to be on point.

Helping out the USA is the schedule. They play Georgia on Friday, a team they should beat. Head Coach Alex Magleby said he remembers playing Georgia in the 2005 World Cup, and how they "smashed us in the mouth and forced us to play one-pass rugby."

He says the team – his 2013 team – cannot get caught up in outcomes. If they have scored only one try in the first half against Georgia, they can't force it; they have to keep playing smart rugby and "keep doing the basic things right."

It can be pretty detrimental, said Magleby, "if they focus on the outcome rather than focusing on the basic skill, the right behaviors. Georgia is a difficult team. They are experienced on that Euro circuit. If you give them a chance in terms of going into contact, it can be really, really difficult."

But, they do start off with a team they can beat, thus putting them in a good spot to beat Canada (you know that's going to be a monumental game) and then facing New Zealand at the end of the day with all to play for.

And if the USA team fails to make the top eight regardless, there's another issue to deal with. They will be disappointed, mightily disappointed, and will have to pick things up in order to finish well on Sunday.

"If that happened, there is a letdown," said Magleby. "A great example was the quarterfinal in London. The guys were devastated in losing to Australia, but they had to keep going and focus against South Africa. We had a decent performance against South Africa, which was good."

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They may well need that resilience again.

Four years ago the USA team did not bounce back. They lost their first match, a match they should have won, and couldn't bounce back from the disappointment. This year, there's plenty of reason to expect the Eagles can find success at the World Cup. But, they will need to ignore all talk of outcomes and points difference and how many tries they need right now, and just play.