

## Suggitt: A Bittersweet Result

Written by Jackie Finlan  
Friday, 01 February 2013 17:44

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“Shoulda, woulda, coulda,” USA Women’s 7s coach Ric Suggitt said after the Eagles’ 12-12 draw against Canada, the teams’ first game at the Houston 7s. While the coach wasn’t at all displeased with team’s performance, one detected a note of frustration with the near-win.



“We should’ve won the game earlier,” Suggitt said as he reflected on the missed conversion that turned a 14-12 victory over Canada into the aforementioned 12-12 tie. “You never blame one person for a game, whether it’s a win, a loss, or a tie. The total team concept is what we preach and what I believe. We had a chance at the end of the game to score another try, as we saw in earlier in the game, if we had made that first-up tackle or chased back a little faster, we would have denied them a score. But, yes, it’s disappointing to get a tie when it’s a game you know you should have won.”

That said, the 12-12 tie was the best result the USA has had against Canada in the past year. The Eagles lost to Canada on the last play of the Amsterdam 7s final, and fell 14-7 in the Las Vegas title match.

“They’ve been close games,” Suggitt said. “The big plus is the change in athletes from the residency program. Prior to that we were losing to Canada 32-0, Australia 30-0, England 35-0 and stuff like that. The athletes have closed that gap and now we’re competitive. I’m pretty happy with the way the girls came back, playing.”

The biggest difference Suggitt has seen over the last year is fitness, followed by an improvement in fundamentals.

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“They work hard and we’re able to play a more expansive game, and that will only get better over time,” Suggitt said. “Defense is what we have to fixate on again, but some of it was just human error. Sometimes someone makes a really good move – Ashley Steacy dips underneath you and it’s tough to stop. She’s like a little Serevi. ... They have a good team and we respect them. They’re our rivals and we’re battling for the same thing. Today, we wished we had one more minute on the clock.”

But Suggitt didn’t dwell on what could have been for very long. He praised the solid work of Kelly Griffin, the breakout performance of Lauren Doyle, and relished the progress his team has made.

“I told them to keep believing in what you’re doing,” Suggitt said of his post-game debrief. “They fought back, and they should have won the game, but they kept it in control. And when they were on the ropes, they made the tackles, pushed them out of bounds, and played from minute one to fourteen.”

The USA see South Africa, which won their opener 27-0 over Argentina.