It was no secret that the USA was facing their least competitive opponent in their final match of the day. Argentina was 0-2 heading into round three of the Houston 7s, and the Eagles needed a solid win to salve any doubts that may have arisen during their first two games.

Heading into Round 3 with a 1-1 record was definitely a positive stance – the tie against Canada was the best result in more than a year; and by defeating South Africa, the USA topped the Dubai 7s finalist. But those results were slightly tinged by the fact that the USA should have won the Canada game, and South Africa would have won their match hadn't Lauren Doyle scored on the final play of the game. The USA needed a victory that was rightfully theirs, and they did that with the Argentina win.

"We were really relaxed going into this game," two-time try scorer Jill Potter (photo right, Paul Rudman) said. "We wanted to focus on things we're good at and also our fundamentals. Putting the pressure on them early, intimidating them and attacking the line – those were our key focuses."

Right from the kickoff, the USA stuck to their word – which was important, as the slow starts marred both of the Eagles' earlier games. And was Argentina intimidated?

"Absolutely," Potter affirmed. "You could see that in our kickoffs during this match. We were able to put some pressure on them and they mishandled multiple times."

Which led to a flurry of tries during the first half. Mistake after mistake allowed the USA to begin with possession in Argentina's end, and six different players eventually dotted down.

Even with the big cushion, the USA remained disciplined and adhered to the game plan established before the match.

"No, we didn't really experiment," Potter said. "We really wanted to execute and keep our pace through the line, not let up and just keep pounding it and putting the pressure on. Nothing fancy, stick to the basics."

But "nothing fancy" isn't totally accurate. When the Eagles are on the front foot, they can impress with their creativity. Potter in particular was able to get involved in the open field play a bit more, an opportunity that eluded her in the first two matches.

"In the fisrt two games I was really focusing on hitting the rucks, maintaining possession," Potter said, "but through the hard work of my teammates, I was given the opportunity to run with the ball. I was really happy about that."

Had the USA scored one fewer tries, then Canada would have topped Pool B, and the Eagles would be preparing for New Zealand in the Cup Quarterfinals tomorrow. The Americans don't have it that much easier in Russia, who matched Australia in physicality and showcased some fantastic, shifty speed out of players like Baizat Khamidova and Ekaterina Kazakova. But now the USA has reinforced their beliefs in their systems: They work when they're executed properly and forcefully.

"It was a really great finish, especially after the two difficult games this morning," Potter said. "But we showed character in those two games, and that's going to give us an edge for tomorrow, being able to compete with that kind of pressure on ourselves will give us a sense of confidence, security and trust in each other. It was nice that we had those two really close games."

Even if the USA loses every game tomorrow, they will have improved upon their Dubai

performance – in terms of finish. But that certainly is not what the Eagles are thinking about.

“Yes, we wanted to improve on Dubai, but it doesn’t put any pressure on us,” Potter said. “We just want to play to our potential. We’ve trained a lot, fixed a lot of kinks, and we’ve improved as a team.”

The USA kicks off against Russia at 1:48 p.m. CST.