

Italy Looking Past USA ... or Not

Written by Alex Goff

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Is the Italian team looking past the USA?

Comments from their outstanding captain and No. 8 Sergio Parisse, perhaps prompted by questions by the press, indicate they might be.

Parisse spent much of today's press briefing talking not about Tuesday's clash with the Eagles (live on Universal Tuesday, Sept 25 2:15am Eastern, and on Monday, Sept 26 11:15pm Pacific – please note Daylight Savings Time is now in effect in New Zealand) but about October 2nd's game with Ireland.

"Of course we are all aware of the match against Ireland. It could be the end of our World Cup or the chance to make history," said Parisse, adding quickly that the team is still focused on the USA match. "We don't want to think about it too much because we could waste too much of our energy on it. We want the right result tomorrow so that we can prepare for the Ireland match in the best way possible."

Italy would do well not to think too hard on a potential quarterfinal slot, and more on clinching two wins.

"This match is important for two reasons," said Mauro Bergamasco. "One to keep our competition alive because we have to win to stay in contention for the final pool match. Secondly we need to repeat our performance from our last match to give ourselves confidence ahead of the match with Ireland."

Ireland coming into the conversation once more, but Bergamasco is still cogniscent of this week's opponents.

"We have seen all the United States' pool matches," he said. "They are very physical and have improved their game plan over the last few years and we saw that they really troubled Ireland. We prepare differently for each team that we play. The USA are very physical and confident at

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the breakdown and the lineout. For us possession is fundamental as we want to attack with the ball in hand, though we will have to be aware of their speedy backs."

Speedy backs causing problems would be nice for the Eagles, but that hasn't been seen much. In this final game for the USA at the 2011 World Cup, the Americans would do well to find some space for an impressive set of outside backs to use.

But to head Eagle Head Coach, we might see another gritty, tight match.

"They're a very good set piece team, very physical, carry the ball aggressively, take it through phases and have a good kicking game," said O'Sullivan. "I think teams know that if you try and score three or four tries in the first 20 minutes it's a recipe for getting yourself into trouble. I can't imagine Italy will have that mindset. I think they'll be smart about it and try and plug away. They'll try and get a couple of tries in the first half and a couple in the second half playing a controlled game."