

= Hard Ball =

" Hard Ball " (also known as " Negotiation ") is the fifteenth episode of NBC 's first season of 30 Rock . It was written by one of the season 's co @-@ producers , Matt Hubbard , and directed by one of the season 's supervising producers , Don Scardino . It aired on February 22 , 2007 in the United States . Guest stars who appeared in the episode were David Alan Basche , Gregg Bello , Katrina Bowden , Kevin Brown , Grizz Chapman , Rachel Dratch , Keith Powell , Lonny Ross and Gregory Wooddell . Tucker Carlson and Chris Matthews also appear as themselves in the episode .

The episode focuses on Jenna Maroney (Jane Krakowski) trying to clear her name after being misquoted in an interview for Maxim Magazine . Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin) begins negotiations to Josh Girard 's (Lonny Ross) new contract . Kenneth Parcell (Jack McBrayer) becomes the newest member of Tracy Jordan 's (Tracy Morgan) entourage .

= = Plot = =

When Josh 's contract is due for renewal , Jack enters negotiation mode . Jack is looking to save money with the negotiations outcome , so Liz Lemon (Tina Fey) warns Josh to be careful . Later , thinking Josh is ill , Liz goes to order some soup and on her way , sees Josh . He meets with a producer from The Daily Show , which angers Liz , who decides to help Jack negotiate . When Josh and his agent return to negotiate , believing that an offer from the Daily Show was on the table , Jack promptly reveals that he was able to get the offer from the Daily Show pulled and thus leave Josh with no negotiating power . Jack then offers Josh the same terms as his previous contract , but Liz , upset that Josh was not made to suffer for his " betrayal " by speaking with another show , orders Josh to start doing the worm .

Meanwhile , Jenna gets into trouble after she is misquoted in Maxim magazine , allegedly saying that she hates the troops . This happened due to Jenna mishearing the interviewer and thinking he meant theater troupes . The resulting outrage prompts Jack to get her an interview on Hardball with Chris Matthews to clear up the confusion over her comments . During the interview , Jenna confuses Osama bin Laden and then @-@ Senator Barack Obama , who was running for the Democratic Party nomination for President . A further attempt to clear Jenna 's name backfires when swastikas are accidentally brandished on the TGS with Tracy Jordan stage .

Tracy allows Kenneth into his entourage , but in the process discovers that Grizz (Grizz Chapman) and Dot Com (Kevin Brown) have been allowing him to win at things such as Halo , Trivial Pursuit , and basketball . Tracy " fires " Grizz and Dot Com from the entourage , but the union between Tracy and Kenneth does not jell . Grizz and Dot Com come to the rescue after Tracy is surrounded by a mob outside 30 Rockefeller Plaza , which is protesting against the controversy caused by Jenna .

= = Production = =

Rachel Dratch , longtime comedy partner and fellow Saturday Night Live alumna of Fey , was originally cast to portray Jenna . Dratch played the role in the show 's original pilot , but in August 2006 , Jane Krakowski was announced as Dratch 's replacement . Executive producer Lorne Michaels announced that while Dratch would not be playing a series regular , she would appear in various episodes in a different role . In this episode , Dratch played Martha Blanch , the activist who is leading the protests , outside of 30 Rockefeller Center , against Jenna .

= = Reception = =

In the U.S. , the episode remained the lowest @-@ rated episode of the series , in total viewers , until the fifth season . This episode was viewed by 4 @.@ 6 million viewers and received a rating of 2 @.@ 4 / 5 in the key adults 18 ? 49 demographic according to the Nielsen ratings system . The 2 @.@ 4 refers to 2 @.@ 4 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds , and the 5 refers to 5 % of all 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ olds watching television at the time of the broadcast . " Hard Ball " held 86 %

of 18- to 49 @-@ year @-@ old viewers who had viewed the Scrubs episode " My Therapeutic Month " which aired at 9 : 00PM EST , before " Hard Ball " at 9 : 30 .

Julia Ward of TV Squad exclaimed that the episode 's three storylines were " all brilliant " . She praised Alec Baldwin , saying that " his negotiation scenes were gold as was his line delivery " . She felt that Baldwin 's great acting was " not unique to this episode " , and was what earned him the Golden Globe . Ward finished her review by saying that it was " satisfying to see a show come together as 30 Rock [had in the] past few weeks - settling into its rhythm [and] finding its feet " . Eric Goldman of IGN felt that this episode " did a very skillful job of juggling three different storylines , all of which delivered solid laughs " . He thought that the crew of 30 Rock had figured out " better uses for Jenna , and this episode offered some nice moments for her " . He also enjoyed Tracy and Kenneth 's subplot , saying it " was a decent one " .

" Hard Ball " was nominated for a total of three awards , winning one . Jeff Richmond was nominated for a Creative Arts Emmy Award in the category of Outstanding Original Main Title Theme Music for his work on this episode . Matt Hubbard , the writer of this episode , was also nominated for a Writers Guild of America Award in the category of Best Episodic Comedy . The episode was also submitted to voters for the Primetime Emmy Awards category Outstanding Comedy Series , which it won .