

## Hardball

Saturday, 23 February 2008

**HARDBALL.** The code name used by U.S. Army Sergeant Wilmer S. Duggleby. Born in Cooperstown, New York -- home of the National Baseball Hall of Fame -- it wasn't surprising that he became a centerfielder in the minor leagues. After playing there for five years, Hardball realized the big league scouts weren't interested in bringing him up to the majors, looking for a star player and not the hardworking team player Hardball was. He joined the Army and began training in the use of advanced grenade launchers, finding a similarity between throwing a baseball and launching a grenade.

He eventually made his way to the G.I. Joe team. On his first mission with the Joes, Hardball was part of another mission to stop Cobra from claiming a newly created island in the Gulf of Mexico. Hardball and a group of new Joes led by and Ripcord and Outback defeated Cobra's forces, only to have the unstable island sink back beneath the ocean. Some time later, Hardball and a team of Joes stormed the offices of Nexus Tech -- a software company contracted by the government -- to foil a hostage situation. The mission was successful, but it turned out that the hostages and terrorists all worked for Cobra, who had made a deal with the company's owner to cover up documents that proved he was cheating the government for years. Hardball's baseball skills came to play when he "pitched" a grenade during the Joes' fight to stop Cobra from kidnapping the President at a major league baseball game. A short time later, Hardball manned a turret in the Mean Dog attack vehicle, battling Cobra on a highway near Broca Beach, New Jersey. Hardball worked with the Joes until the team was shut down in 1994.

Hardball was later called back to join the reinstated Joe team in its battle against the forces of a revived Serpentor on Cobra Island. Some time later, Hardball joined Glenda and Rampart on a mission to investigate a Cobra training outpost in Brazil. When the team arrived at the outpost, they found the Cobra agents inside had been killed. The group then stumbled upon the killers, operatives of the mysterious Red Shadows. Hardball and his companions were then killed as well, the first victims of the Red Shadows' campaign against G.I. Joe. The Red Shadows' plans were eventually defeated.

(GI 80, 89, SM 17, 24; GIv2 24, 26, 38; Figure: 1)