

A Soccer Ball That Gives You Energy -- Really



The sOcket ball can store up to 24 hours' worth of power

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This is the VOA Special English Technology Report.

Have you ever heard the expression "a ball of energy"? People often use the term to describe very active children. But today we tell about an invention called the sOcket that is a real ball of energy. Julia Silverman explains.

JULIA SILVERMAN: "The sOcket is a cutting-edge portable generator in the form of a soccer ball."

Julia Silverman and Jessica Matthews developed the sOcket as part of a group project for an engineering class at Harvard University.

To better understand what a sOcket is, you first need to understand how it works.

JULIA SILVERMAN: "When you play with the ball, there is all this energy being transferred to the ball -- even any normal soccer ball. Basically, what we're trying to do is instead of letting that energy dissipate into the environment or just be lost, we're harnessing it inside using these mechanisms, this technology that essentially tries to capture everything with the movement. Everything that is

harnessed is then stored in a battery of sorts."The sOccket collects and stores this energy with every kick, hit or throw of the ball.

JULIA SILVERMAN: "Then the user can plug any accessory directly into the ball, like a lamp to study, or a cell phone charger. We're developing a water purifier and hopefully some other things that might be beneficial."

For every fifteen minutes of game play, the sOccket can provide enough electricity to power an LED lamp for up to three hours. The ball can store up to twenty-four hours' worth of power.

The International Energy Association reported last year that nearly one and a half billion people did not have access to electricity. Most of them live in sub-Saharan Africa and in India and other countries in Asia.

Julia Silverman and Jessica Matthews both had experience in developing countries before they began the project. They knew that power shortages are a serious problem in many areas.

JULIA SILVERMAN: "There's an energy crisis in the world. One out of every five people in the global population don't have any electricity whatsoever. And beyond that, there are a lot of health issues because what people use instead of the electricity are harmful alternatives like kerosene lamps, which produce a lot of smoke."

Ms. Silverman says the sOccket is one small solution to a big problem.

JULIA SILVERMAN: "And so we knew that just a little bit of light would make a huge difference. And we also knew that soccer was the most popular sport, most loved sport in the whole world."

Jessica Matthews and Julia Silverman have started a nonprofit organization called Uncharted Play. They hope their sOccket ball will shine more light on the problem of power shortages. It offers people a chance to put their energy into the world's most popular sport and get some energy in return.

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