Energy-Storing Soccer Ball Scores Big in Off-Grid Villages

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(Gizmag [1]) - What kid doesn't like kicking around a soccer ball? Imagine if this fun activity could also provide enough energy to power something useful in a modest off-grid African village, like a reliable light to cook by or an emergency mobile phone. The sOccket is a prototype soccer ball that captures kinetic energy when it is kicked or thrown, stores it in an internal battery and makes that energy available for a myriad of small but useful purposes. In other words, it's a fun, portable energy-harvesting power source that is designed to take a kicking.

The sOccket captures kinetic energy through an inductive coil mechanism similar to the nPower PEG that can charge mobile devices by shaking. As the ball is kicked around, a magnet is drawn through a coil which creates a current that is then stored on a battery. This technological wizardry means the sOccet weighs slightly more than a regular 16-oz soccer ball (5-oz more), but the sOccket team say it is anticipating its design will get even lighter. They are also investigating using local materials, meaning product from Africa where the product is targeted.

According to the World Bank Millennium Goals Report, 2006, 95 percent of African countries live off-grid with no access to electricity. The girls at sOccket say that people in some developing countries have been known to walk for three hours just to find an outlet from which to charge a mobile phone. With one of the special soccer balls, the team says the power will literally be in the people's hands. They anticipate 15 minutes of play time equaling roughly three hours of power for an LED light.

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