



BallCam - The Day the World Spun

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What do you do when an idea unexpectedly takes off and gains world attention for a few days.

How do you see what a rugby ball sees? Answer: put a camera inside the ball. With the assistance of Mark Smith, a BinfoTech student at Otago Polytechnic, the authors did just that and the results were surprisingly good. Good, that is so long as the ball (a) wasn't kicked in the wrong place and (b) stayed still.

The fact that the pricey camera prevented the ball being used in a real game and the fact that the image on the screen, transmitted via radio, made the viewer nauseous only made the project more interesting. A rugby ball with a camera in it was tossed into a crowd of businessmen attending a showcase of student projects in Dunedin in November 2001.

The next day the Otago Daily Times had a banner headline and a quarter-page photograph of the authors "Every Picture will tell the story: playing the ball may take on new meaning". At least five other national newspapers had front page coverage.

For the rest of the week the media were all over the IT department wanting to know about ballcam.

In their subsequent report some said:



some said:

Une caméra dans un ballon!

L'école polytechnique d'Otago, au sud de la Nouvelle-Zélande, est en train de mettre au point, selon le quotidien néo-zélandais Daily Tiles, une caméra révolutionnaire qu'ils ont surnommé "ballcam", qui pourrait être placée dans un ballon de rugby.

and some even said:

Labdából közvetítenének rögbimeccseket

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Az angolszász területen hatalmas népszerűségnek örvendő rögbi televíziós közvetítéseinek újdonsága lehet, ha sikerül megvalósítani a filmezést a labdán belülről.



Az úgynevezett "ballcam" az új-zélandi Otago Polytechnic nevű cég laboratóriumában készül, és a mérnökök azt mondják, közel állnak ahhoz, hogy elkészüljenek a labdába helyezett minikamerával.

Staff were interviewed for radio, TV and newspapers from the following countries: Australia. UK. France, Hungary, Japan, and South Africa. There were also numerous interviews from New Zealand media including three TV Channels and several radio spots. Both New Zealand television networks had the story before the first ad-break on the six o'clock news.

Some major questions remain.

- ◆ What are the pros and cons of featuring a pre-prototype product early?
- ◆ What pressures should there be to finish ballcam and follow up?
- ◆ How should a Polytech handle such interest and make the most of it?
- ◆ Is an unrehearsed, incomplete gadget a research output?
- ◆ How to go about commercialising this product?
- ◆ If the world's attention is (sort of) on you, what's the best reaction for a prudent IT school?
- ◆ Can you prepare staff adequately for interviews from the print media as well as radio and TV?
- ◆ Just say we had an equally good product this year, what should we do next?

