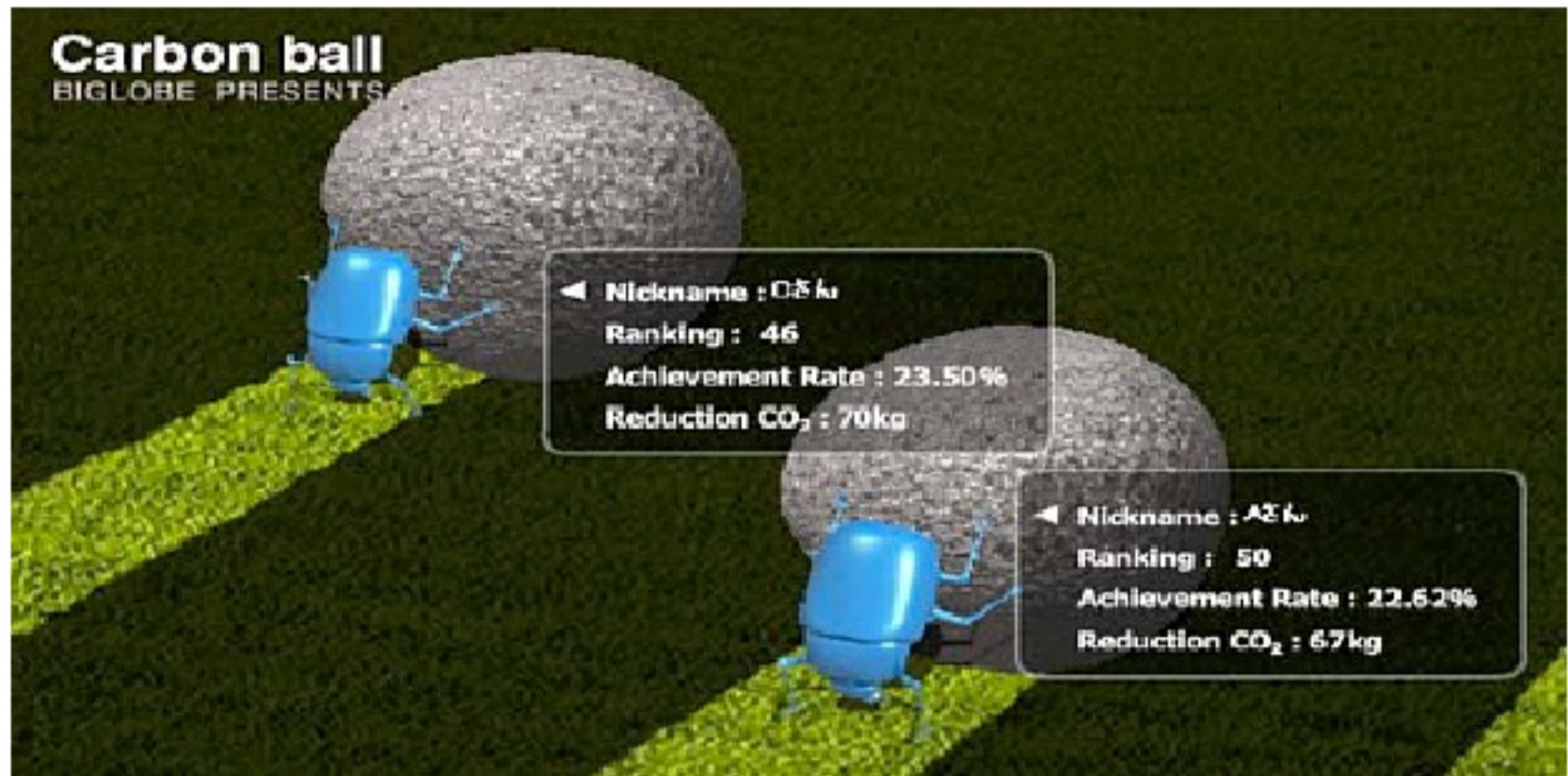


NEC Turns Your Power Consumption into an Online Game

BY ARIEL SCHWARTZ Fri Apr 3, 2009 at 6:59 PM



If the idea of tracking and analyzing your power consumption via a [chart](#) makes you want to curl up and die, consider [NEC's](#) online energy games. The electronics company's program, currently undergoing a three-month trial in employees' homes, uses a WiFi-enabled device attached to your circuit breaker to keep track of power consumption. Information is transmitted to your computer via [Zigbee](#) wireless technology, where it can be used to play games like "Carbon Diet" and "Carbon Ball".

Neither of the games sound particularly interesting. Carbon Diet lets you compete against other households to see who uses the least amount of power. The households with the most eco-points can buy virtual soil, water, flowers, and grass, but NEC doesn't say if the "natural restoration simulation" has a point besides looking pretty.

Carbon Ball is only slightly more exciting. The game features dung beetles competing to travel the farthest, with distance determined by power consumption.

Carbon Diet and Carbon Ball probably won't fly off the shelves anytime soon (although NEC thinks it will sell \$20 million worth of the games over a three year period), but they are part of a trend of power consumption games--a trend which is likely to grow once smart meters become more common. Other potential competitors in the energy game arena include [Lost Joules](#) and Stanford University Professor Bryan Reeve's [Massively Multiplayer Online Game](#) (MMOG). Whether adults want to while away the hours racing dung beetles remains to be seen, but online games might be the best way to teach kids about energy use.

[Via [Pink Tentacle](#)]

Tags: Innovation, Technology, Ethnomics, carbon diet, carbon ball, NEC, powermeter, energy consumption, power use, power consumption, mmog, [Stanford](#)



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