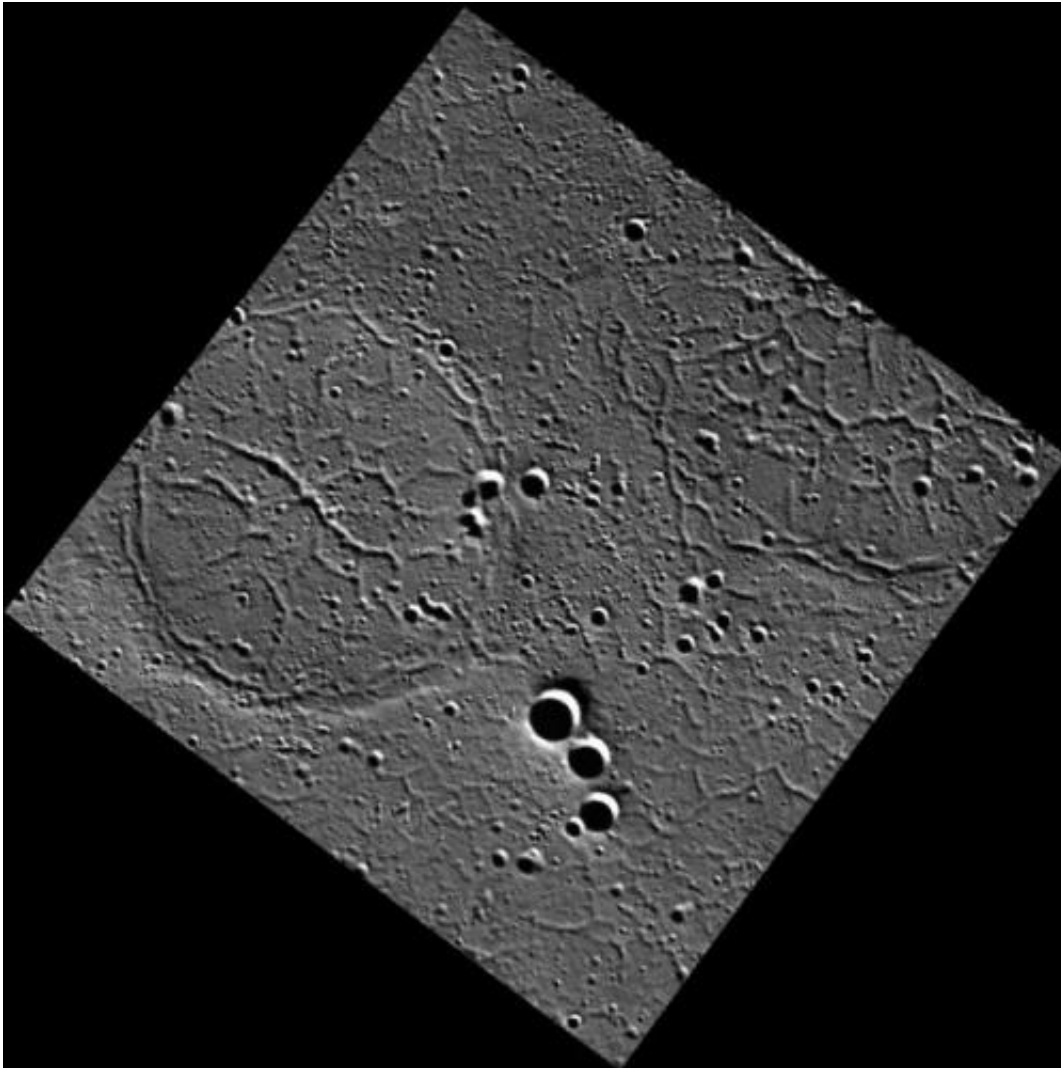


MESSENGER spies a soccer ball on Mercury

June 27 2014



Credit: NASA/Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory/Carnegie Institution of Washington

Olé, Olé, Olé! Good news World Cup fans, a soccer ball has been found on Mercury! This 'soccer ball' is actually an old impact crater in [Goethe Basin](#) that has been flooded with volcanic lava flows, resulting in a '[ghost crater](#)'. The pattern inside is a network of narrow valleys that were formed by [thermal contraction](#) and cracking of the lavas as they cooled.

This image was acquired as part of MDIS's high-resolution surface morphology base map. The surface morphology base map covers more than 99% of Mercury's surface with an average resolution of 200 meters/pixel. Images acquired for the surface morphology base map typically are obtained at off-vertical Sun angles (i.e., high incidence angles) and have visible shadows so as to reveal clearly the topographic form of geologic features.

The MESSENGER spacecraft is the first ever to orbit the planet Mercury, and the spacecraft's seven scientific instruments and radio science investigation are unraveling the history and evolution of the Solar System's innermost planet. During the first two years of orbital operations, MESSENGER acquired over 150,000 images and extensive other data sets. MESSENGER is capable of continuing orbital operations until early 2015.

Source: [Astrobio.net](#)

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