

Figure 1. Postcard mailed from the 1962 World Cup being held in Santiago, Chile, with the autographs of players on the German team. Franked with the two World Cup stamps, the card was destined for another soccer fan in Göppingen, Germany.

Turning Over the Stone: The Hidden Story of a 1962 World Cup Postcard

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I came across the interesting postcard shown in Figures 1 and 2 at the Boston 2026 World Expo, at a UK dealer's booth. German soccer has been an interest of mine since the early 1970s, partly due to the PBS series "Soccer Made in Germany," and I began collecting and exhibiting this topic many years ago. I've written on the subject for the *American Philatelist*, most recently in June 2026, and spoke at Boston on "Soccer Made in Germany: Germany and the World Cup."

I was not looking for any particular item, but when I saw a small section labeled "Football," I decided to take a look. I first noticed the Chilean World Cup commemorative stamps on the card (Scott #341 and #C246, both showing a goalie making a save) and decided to examine the item more closely. Then I noticed the address—and the signatures.

The postcard was addressed to Polizeirat (Police Superintendent) Emil Mutschler in Göppingen, birthplace of legendary German international soccer player and former U.S. coach Jürgen Klinsmann. It bears a standard Chilean airmail double-ring cancel from Santiago. Under magnification, the date reads 4 Jun 62-20H; in other words, it was cancelled at 8 p.m.

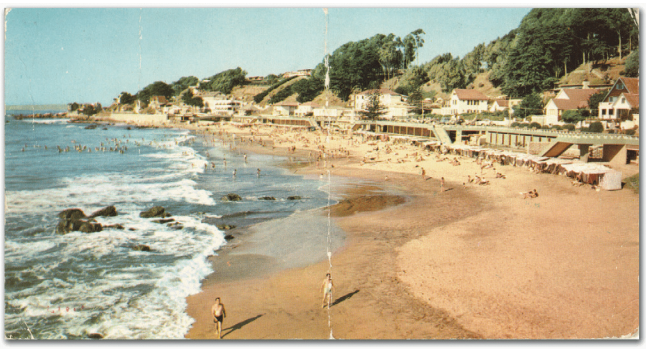

Figure 2. Picture side of the postcard in Figure 1.



Figure 3. Emblem of the 1962 World Cup.

Also present, amid the signatures, is a special marking for the World Cup. It depicts the main National Stadium, where West Germany played all of its matches, with a Chilean flag on the field superimposed on an orb that is a soccer ball on top and a globe on the bottom. The text reads "Campeonato Mundial de Futball" (World Championship of Football) at the top, and "Copa Jules Rimet/Chile/1962" (Jules Rimet Cup/Chile/1962) at the bottom. An example in color may be seen in Figure 3 [1].

There is also a receiving mark in violet ink dated June 9 (9.6.62), possibly applied at the recipient's office, as well as a handwritten date of June 16, 1962. Both stamps used were 5 centésimos, for a total of 10c, which was the airmail postcard rate to West Germany.

The card reads, in German:

"Mein Lieber Mello: Gestern Schweiz-Deutschland gesehen, sehr fair. Bin gespannt auf Mittwoch gegen Chile. Es grüsst dich Dein Freund

Fritz

Das sind unsere Nationalspieler: (der Deutschen)"

Translated:

"My dear Mello: Saw Switzerland-Germany yesterday, very fair. Am eager for Wednesday vs. Chile. Greetings from your friend.

Fritz

These are our national team players: (the Germans)"

On the left side of the card are almost 20 signatures (Figure 4). This was an exciting find! Determining which autograph belonged to which player was difficult, particularly since some apparently signed only their last names. However, I was able to make tentative identifications of three signatures.

The autograph indicated by the red arrow seems to be that of Hans Nowak of Schalke 04, who played in all four of West Germany's matches at the World Cup. The blue arrow indicates Hans Schäfer of 1. FC Köln, the West German captain. Schäfer had scored four goals as a member of West Germany's victorious team at the 1954 FIFA World Cup and had also captained the team at the 1958 tournament in Sweden. The signature noted by the green arrow appears to be that of assistant coach Helmut Schön, who would later lead West Germany to the 1974 World Cup title as head coach. The other autographs appear consistent with signatures found on similar items from the 1962 team [2].

After drawing 0-0 with Italy in its opening group-stage match, West Germany defeated Switzerland 2-1 in the first game mentioned on the card. The team then beat Chile 2-0 in the second game mentioned, thereby winning its group. West Germany's tournament ended in the quarterfinals with a 1-0 loss to Yugoslavia. Highlights of the West Germany-Switzerland match may be found on FIFA's website [3], along with reports on the tournament matches [4].



Figure 4. Signature field of the card with arrows indicating three tentatively identified autographs.

Brazil ultimately became World Champion for the second consecutive time, lifting the Jules Rimet Cup after a 3-1 victory over Czechoslovakia in the final at Santiago. As of 2026, Brazil remains only the second—and most recent—team to win consecutive World Cups.

Some of the players on the 1962 West German squad would form the nucleus of the great West German team at the 1966 World Cup, where they lost the title to England in overtime in the final at Wembley Stadium in London. Uwe Seeler of Hamburger SV, who scored twice in Chile in 1962, would captain the West German team in 1966.

Topically, this card is a great addition to my collection. Normally, that would be the end of the story. However ...

"Turn over the stone under the stone."
—W.E.B. Griffin, advice to a new homicide detective in his *Badge of Honor* series

We've looked at the postal history aspects of the card. We've also looked at how it fits into sports history, specifically soccer. But there is another philatelic area to consider: the newer field of social philately.

While postal history considers the mechanisms, rates, and routes of the postal services, social philately looks at the people, places, and history behind the mail—and places them in context. This can include not only a particular cover or card but also its contents. The question becomes: what story does this item tell?

We don't know much about the sender, except that he was clearly a big fan of German soccer. He may have been from Göppingen, judging from the familiarity of his message and his use of a nickname for his friend. Travel to Chile in those days was not as common as it is today. The Jet Age was just beginning, and Chile was still suffering from the aftereffects of one of the worst earthquakes in recorded history, the Valdivia earthquake of May 1960. The trip must have been quite a journey for the sender. The card itself was folded once, perhaps because he kept it that way in his pocket to protect the signatures.

The recipient is a different story.

In philatelic research, it never hurts to Google names and addresses. I've had some success with this in the past. In this case, I searched for the recipient's name and city—to "turn over the stone under the stone": Emil Mutschler, Göppingen, Germany.

Up popped Reference 5: "The Riot Police of Göppingen in the First Decades after the War." Mutschler (1912-2001) is specifically mentioned in the introduction, and a short biographical study appears on page 449.

Mutschler was head of the Second Division of the Göppingen Riot Police from 1965 to 1973 and was responsible for the training and leadership of many young police officers, including the author of the study. His earlier history, however, was more troubling.

Mutschler joined the Nazi Party and the SA at age 20, then joined the Schutzpolizei (State Police) in 1937. During World War II, he served on the Eastern Front, including involvement in anti-partisan activities in Slovenia. From 1945 to 1946, he was interned by American forces because of his Nazi affiliations.

During the Allied denazification process, authorities initially sought to classify Mutschler as a "major offender." As interest in denazification waned with the rise of the Cold War, however, he was eventually classified in 1949 as a lesser "Mitläufer," or nominal Nazi. By 1951 he was back in police service.

During the denazification process, a number of colleagues reportedly considered Mutschler still proud of his Nazi past and of his status as an early member of the party. Mutschler himself characterized his prewar and wartime service as "totally unpolitical in nature," a claim the author of the study described as "astonishing chutzpah."

To be fair, we must also note, as the author of the study did, that neither Mutschler nor the other police officials discussed in the article was ever convicted of war crimes. In fact, none of those mentioned was ever brought to trial, although some were investigated.

The author also points out the difficulty faced by postwar authorities in rebuilding—and reforming—the German police. Any experienced police officer had necessarily served under the Nazi system, while younger candidates had almost certainly participated in compulsory Nazi youth organizations. This placed the authorities in a difficult position. As a result, a number of former Nazis, with varying degrees of involvement and culpability, returned to police service in Göppingen and elsewhere in Germany.

Even the 1962 West German team was not entirely untouched by the Nazi years, a consequence of the policy of *Gleichschaltung*—the bringing into line of all parts of German society, including sports, under National Socialism. Most of the players had been children during the Nazi era,



Figure 5. A memorial at Dachau Concentration Camp: "Never Again." (Photo by author, October 2025)

although those of the appropriate age would have been subject to participation in Nazi youth organizations.

West German coach Sepp Herberger had also coached the German national team during the Third Reich and had joined the Nazi Party. His party membership again became a subject of discussion in 2008, when he was included in the inaugural class of the German Sports Hall of Fame.

Did Mutschler and others like him change their views about Nazism later in life? We can hope so, but we really cannot know.

What we can do is remember what happened in Nazi Germany. As the memorial at Dachau states (Figure 5): *"Never Again."*

So, to sum up: "Turn over the stone under the stone." You may be surprised at what you find.

References

1. Wikipedia.

2. "Lot 41571 – 1962 World Cup in Chile: 1962 (May 28) postcard written by Erich Deuser, with autographs of the West German team," David Feldman Autumn 2025 Auction Series. https://www.davidfeldman.com/dfsa-auctions/winter-2025-auction-series/europe-overseas-collections-autumn-2025/41571/football-1962-world-cup-in-chile-1962-may-28-postcard-written-by-erich-deuser-with-autogra-000000001/?soff_session_page=25&soff_session_status=unsold&soff_auction_browse=1&soff_query_hash=585030be538dbf1c7f734d52cf3a7812

3. FIFA: Highlights of West Germany-Switzerland 1962. https://www.fifa.com/en/watch/1MMugaL9MWQPEmC8Di4uwC

4. FIFA Match Archive. https://inside.fifa.com/ data-centre/matches/men?competitionClassificationCode=FWC

5. Kuckenburg, M. Hauptsache «fest in der Hand». Die Bereitschaftspolizei Göppingen in den ersten Nachkriegsjahrzehnten. *Schwäbische Heimat* 2019, issue 4, pp 446-452.

Note: Wikipedia was used as a source to confirm dates and other data. All translations are the author's, though Google Translate was used to assist in that process.

Further reading

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West Germany: (Back row) Schulz, Seeler, Giesemann, Szymaniak, Schnellinger. (Front row) Brulls, Kraus, Nowak, Schafer, Fahrian, Erhardt. (Source: Facebook)