

From 1955 to July 1971, "Kicker" did not comment on individual players in separate sections but only reserved one or two sentences for the highest-ranked players in their general commentary. There was no ranking issued in July 1960.

December 1960

The "Ranking of German Footballers" of "Kicker" at the end of the year has become already a good tradition. Because our last ranking was issued a year ago this new ranking recognizes the performances of the whole year. Occasional weak performances of a player were left unconsidered just as a sole brilliant performance also was left unconsidered. The measurement is the form over the whole year.

The fiercest debates among our readership will of course be caused by those players we rated as 'world class'. We count Tilkowski, Szymaniak, Uwe Seeler and Schnellinger among them. **Uwe Seeler** is valued on foreign soil at least as highly as in Germany. German journalists voted him "German Footballer of the Year". Europe's leading sports journalists also gave him many votes. For four years already foreign journalists rate **Szymaniak** as one of the world's best. We already rated **Tilkowski** as 'world class' last year. And he confirmed our rating this year quite convincingly. With regards to **Schnellinger** we may not overvalue his at times weaker performances in the last few weeks but we have to look at the sum of outstanding performances during the whole year in international and club competitions. We also do not want to conceal that we rate Erhardt's performances in the second half of the season as stopper as 'world class'. But as we said: only in the second half of the season.

"And what about Rahn?" many will ask. Rahn only played for Köln until June. Since then he plays for the Dutch club Enschede (as outside right, center forward and outside left). As before, German players that ply their trade outside of Germany have to miss our ranking due to the lack of comparisons with domestic players.

July 1961

The "Ranking of German Footballers" of "Kicker" has become a good tradition by now. It is published semiannually. Today's ranking recognizes the performances from January 1961 up to season's end and thus the second half of the season. In doing so, naturally the final games of the championship and the games of our national team (Belgium, Chile and Northern Ireland) are included.

The fiercest debates will again be caused by the term "world class". We count **Uwe Seeler**, **Horst Szymaniak** and **Karl-Heinz Schnellinger** as "world class". A bad performance by Uwe Seeler every now and then arguably do not change our ranking of him because only the sum of the performances are counted.

Very possibly Szymaniak will be featured for the last time in our ranking if he the DFB releases him to play for Catania next weekend, as German players playing abroad evade our constant observation which is also the reason why Helmut Rahn is not featured in our ranking. Just the same foreigners that play in Germany are not evaluated.

December 1961

.... today's ranking recognizes the performances from the start of the season until the end of the year, observing club games and especially games of the national team (versus Denmark 5-0, Poland 2-0 and Greece 2-1). as 'world class' we rated this time **Uwe Seeler** as center forward and **Karl-Heinz Schnellinger** as full back, the position he also played for the national team. many players are included in more than one category, like Schnellinger (full back and half back), Erhardt and the Frankfurt player Lutz (stopper and full back), Kraus (outside right and center forward) as well as Brülls and Vollmar (outside left and center

forward). slim remains the number of players of "international class" inside the categories of center forward and outside left. No competitor to Uwe Seeler in sight! "Kicker" hopes that more players will be rated "international class" in our next ranking and perhaps one or two players of "world class" apart of Seeler and Schnellinger. Our next ranking will be issued in July 1962, directly after the World Cup [*which, strangely, they did not do, as no ranking was published in July 1962*].

December 1962

Our readers have to browse back a little further than usual as our last ranking was issued on January 2, 1962, if they want to compare it with today's ranking. Out of consideration for the World Cup in Chile we interrupted our usual semiannual cycle to avoid a detrimental discussion at that point. Our current ranking - for reasons of topicality - only evaluates the last half of the year and thus does not look at the World Cup in Chile. We evaluate performances in club competitions, national team games and representative games. Naturally most of the debate will be reserved for the term "world class", a grade we bestowed only after a most thorough observation upon **Schnellinger** and **Seeler**, even if *single* performances of these two players may not have deserved to be labelled as 'world class' or, in reverse, some other players may have looked to be 'world class' in *some* performances. If our ranking would be up for debate among international experts they certainly would arrive at the same result: "world class" only Schnellinger and Seeler! Obviously Seeler showed a performance of "international class" when he played as outside right in the national team game in Stuttgart, a level which Schnellinger would arguably also achieve if he had played as half back. But both do have a regular role in club and national team that's why we did not list them in more than one category.

July 1963

This time our ranking takes a look at the performances of the first half of the year. This means the German championship finals, the international game against Brazil and the league competitions. A special look is reserved for performances in the championship finals because in these games players have to compete against the best clubs in the country. In this relatively short period of time often more was demanded than in the longer ongoing league competitions. In the Bundesliga, this pattern will change.

Only one player has been deemed "world class" by us this time: **Karl-Heinz Schnellinger**. Perhaps in the last few weeks of the season his performances did not fully justify this highest grade but we have to look at the whole time frame - and here Schnellinger certainly has to be labelled as "world class". The performances shown by Seeler, on the other hand, did not meet the highest level this time. We are not among those that are now discounting Seeler. To the contrary, we are convinced that already soon he will be back among our players of "world class".

December 1963

We label our traditional semiannually published ranking "an attempt at an objective assessment". For we are aware that such a work *must* exhibit shortcomings and that the ranking of individual players - while it is not a matter of taste - still is dependent on one's personal view.

This time, the Bundesliga does in fact not make matters easier for us. For the first time we had to consider its existence in some way. Thus we now subclassify the third group ("considered") in Bundesliga players and Regionalliga players resp. Amateurliga players. While this is not at all costs meant as a ranking of these groups of players, we may still assume that a Bundesliga player regularly has to show a higher performance level than those in subleagues. It is however difficult, if not impossible, to say whether Meiderich's

stopper Danzberg (Bundesliga) is comparable to Bayern's stopper Ostner (Regionalliga). The severity of competition and the higher pace certainly speak for Danzberg, which however does not say anything about the actual class of Ostner.

One player who was not at all featured in our last ranking managed to get featured as "international class" straightaway in our current ranking: Overath (Köln).

Missing is the only player we rated as "world class" in our last ranking: Karl-Heinz Schnellinger. He now plays in Italy and thus evades our observation. While we do believe that he still is "world class", out of principle we have to leave him out. And because we are attempting a ranking of *German* players we have not included foreigner players in Germany, like Beara, Prins or Radenkovic.

After applying the strictest standard we once again only found one player of the highest grade: **Uwe Seeler**.

July 1964

After applying the strictest standard we once again only found one player of the highest grade: **Uwe Seeler**.

December 1964

After applying our strict standard we found only two players of "world class" calibre: **Uwe Seeler** and **Hans Tilkowski**, both of which have been called up to play in the European selection.

July 1965

....on the one hand several players that have been injured for many months could not be included in our current ranking, on the other hand Uwe Seeler, who has been injured since February, is entitled to a "world class" grade which we did not want to withdraw from him. Following strict criteria only **Tilkowski** and **Seeler** were classified as "world class".

December 1965

.... We were facing the question whether to classify the half backs as 'ball carriers in midfield'. But since such a classification following the Italian system would not do justice to every league level (Regionalliga mostly), we kept the classification as half backs. Trimhold and Lechner, for example, both of Eintracht Frankfurt, are normally offensive players who scheme their attacks from midfield. In the 4-2-4 system they are additionally also defensive players, acting as fifth and sixth defenders. Goalkeeper **Tilkowski**, who the German journalists voted "German footballer of the year" is still rated as "world class" by us. Also risen to "world class" level is the young Köln player **Wolfgang Weber**.

Weber is "world class" because he has everything, really everything, that is needed to be a stopper of "world class". He possesses excellent physical conditions, is technically (headers and long passes) absolutely perfect and possesses a further great gift, the ability to adapt tactically to his opponent, to dominate his opponent in that terrain. Weber's special class was visible already in the game against Italy in March in Hamburg. Vittorio Pozzo, the mastermind of Italy's two World Cup winning teams, praised as follows: "Weber has everything to become a second Szymaniak".

In the European Cup games for Köln against Liverpool Weber competently stopped the feared goalgetter Roger Hunt, who is also part of England's first team for the World Cup.

Hunt commented after the game: "I have not played against a player of such class for a long time."

Unforgettable Weber's brilliant performance in the decisive game in Rotterdam. Despite a broken fibula he stayed on the pitch for 120 minutes and in the end was Köln's most dangerous attacker. Also fresh in our memory is the second half against Austria in Stuttgart. In this game, Weber took over the stopper role from Sieloff and eliminated Buzek in a superior manner, the man who had been a constant danger for our goal before that. A new Schnellinger, as far as class is concerned!

When "kicker" graded Schnellinger as "world class" for the first time years ago, many protests were heard. We adhered to our opinion and Schnellinger's progress conceded that point to us. We are certain that Weber's progress will also concede that point to us in the future.

Uwe Seeler this time not "world class"? All of the personal characteristics that made Uwe Seeler a player of "world class" can be subsumed under the overall slogan "explosiveness". This ability he has only shown now and then in the first half of the season. His incredible explosiveness made him a player of "world class". We can only wish that Uwe Seeler will regain this explosiveness in the second half of the season, so that we can classify him as "world class" after the World Cup!

September 1966

Due to the World Cup our new ranking appears a little later than usual. The categorization of positions is new in this ranking, as we have adapted to the tactical facts of modern football. In defense we differentiate now between full backs and central defenders. Midfield players are the central actors of today's football. They have to be able to play in defense as well as in attack. Among the forwards these days a determination between central forwards and lateral forwards (left and right) is appropriate. Normally German players abroad do not feature in our ranking. This time however, our "Italians" that played in the World Cup, who we also observed in the months leading to the World Cup in various club games, are included. Although all performances over the past seven months are included, naturally the World Cup performances have a higher degree. In our last ranking we only had **Tilkowski** and **Weber** in the highest category. **Uwe Seeler**, who before his injury was regularly rated as "world class" by Kicker was not featured that time because he had not regained his form at that point. Our "Italians" **Schnellinger** and **Haller** already belonged to that highest category before the World Cup. **Beckenbauer**, **Willi Schulz**, **Overath** and **Höttges** all proved to be of the highest level during the World Cup.

December 1966

Five players have been rated as "world class" by Kicker in our newest ranking due to their performances during the first half of the season: **Willi Schulz** and **Wolfgang Weber** among the defenders, **Franz Beckenbauer** and **Wolfgang Overath** among the midfielders and **Uwe Seeler** among the central forwards. Beckenbauer was also featured among the central defenders. He and Held are the best example for players being listed in more than one category.

July 1967

In January five players were rated as "world class": the defenders Willi Schulz and Wolfgang Weber, the midfielders Franz Beckenbauer and Wolfgang Overath and Uwe Seeler. This time we rated as "world class" **Willi Schulz**, **Franz Beckenbauer** and **Overath**, with Beckenbauer being rated in two positions: midfielder and central defender; especially in the games for Bayern München Beckenbauer almost exclusively was used as a defender. Uwe

Seeler and Wolfgang Weber did not manage to achieve the highest grade. Uwe was often injured, only playing in one of the last nine championship games. Weber played despite being injured which was the exact reason why his performances suffered.

July 1968

In our last ranking in December 1967 no players were rated as "world class", mirroring the crisis of our national team at that time. In the first half of the year our national team did not lose a single of the five games it competed in: in March a 3-1 win in Brussels against Belgium, followed by two away draws in Basel against Switzerland (0-0) and in Cardiff against Wales (1-1). The season was closed with two high-profile victories at home against two World Champions, winning 1-0 against England and 2-1 against Brazil. The performances of the national team are also mirrored in our ranking, in which **Beckenbauer**, **Overath** and **Weber** are rated in the highest level.

December 1968

The trio that we rated "world class" in summer has remained in that highest category: **Beckenbauer**, **Overath** and **Schulz**. *[error: it was Weber who was rated world class in summer 1968, not Schulz].*

July 1969

.....Haller and Schnellinger, who would both enrich our list of 'world class' players, are not featured in our ranking because they are playing abroad. With only **Beckenbauer**, **Willi Schulz** and **Vogts** we are badly equipped in that category. With a heavy heart we had to downgrade Wolfgang Overath from 'world class' to 'international class'. Only in the impressive game in Glasgow against Scotland (1-1) did he reach his old level of 'world class'.

December 1969

.... the 'world class' category has increased from three players in July to four in December. Joining **Beckenbauer**, **Schulz** and **Vogts** is **Wolfgang Overath** again, who together with goalkeeper Manglitz has a considerable share in the soaring of Köln this season.