



Sport Funding Through Stamps: Finding Unlikely Revenue Streams

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Abstract: Sports can be expensive. Ice time for hockey practice to \$200 tennis racquets can discourage some participants. From billion-dollar teams and venues to Olympic Games costing billions as well, where will sports get all the money they need to operate? One vehicle that has been used successfully for almost 100 years has been postage stamps. Funds were not generated just from selling Olympic themed stamps that generated some money for the postal service or maybe a government. The bulk of funds associated with sport-related stamps fundraising has been through semipostal stamps. Semipostal stamps provide for an additional charge over the face value with those funds going to a worthy cause. Worth causes over the years have included tuberculosis research/treatment, disease prevention, supporting the Red Cross, feeding the poor, or winter heating aid. Another beneficiary has been sports. Researching Scott Stamp Catalogues from the 1920s through 2015 has highlighted 60 countries who have issued 920 semipostal stamps to fund everything from Olympics to youth sports, sport venues, and even sport equipment purchases. This article examines how these stamps have been used successfully in the past and how they are still being used. Furthermore, one country, Germany, has been issuing sport-related semipostal stamps for over 50 years and has generated millions of dollars and sold over 250 million sport-related semipostal stamps.

Keywords: Stamps, Olympics, Funding, Stadiums, Revenue

About the Author



Gil Fried is a tenured Full Professor at the University of West Florida and chair of the Administration & Law Department- which encompasses programs such as legal studies, construction management, sport management, and public administration. He started at UWF in 2021. Prior to his appointment

at UWF, Professor Fried was a Professor in the Pompea College of Business at the University of New Haven for 21 years and retired with the designation of Professor Emeritus in 2021. Professor Fried is a specialist in sport law, finance, and facility management. He has written over 13 books on sport risk management, sport facility management, sport analytics, esports, and sport finance. One of the books he wrote is the Academy for Venue Safety and Security (AVSS) textbook used by the International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM). His other textbooks are used in over 140 universities in the United States and have been translated into Chinese, Russian, and Korean. He

lectures nationally on financial risk management, facility risk management, crowd management/venue safety, and sport safety. His books and lecturing are supplemented with writing numerous industry articles. He has published over 400 articles focused on facility and law related concerns. Besides writing for others, he is also the Editor of Sports Facilities & the Law newsletter. In 2011 he was awarded the prestigious Betty van der Smisssen Leadership Award from the Sport Recreation and Law Association (SRLA) for outstanding contribution to the field of sport law education. In 2012 he was awarded the Sport Management Outstanding Achievement Award by the National Association of Sports and Physical Education (NASPE). Professor Fried coordinates the Patron Management Institute (www.patronmanagement.org) and developed their Certificate in Patron Management Program (CPM). He has an active consulting practice called Gil Fried & Associates, LLC and has several major clients from corporations to insurance companies.

1. Introduction

Sports has become a multibillion-dollar enterprise, just in values of individual teams. According to Forbes magazine, most professional teams in the United States (MLB, NFL, NBA, and NHL) and some professional soccer/football teams (Manchester United and Real Barcelona as examples) are now regularly selling for billions of dollars (Ozanian and Teitelbaum, 2022). The World Cup and Olympics regularly bring in hundreds of millions of dollars in broadcast revenue (Bassam, 2021). It is not just the billions in revenues and team valuations. The cost to produce winning sports has also spiraled out of control over the years.

The cost for some players is now in the \$20-\$30 million dollars per year range. The top 50 athletes in the world generated a combined revenue of almost \$3 billion in 2021 (Knight, 2022). Stadiums that cost around \$100 million 20-30 years ago are now costing over \$1 billion in some major metropolitan areas (Fried and Kastel, 2020). Even the cost to offer youth sports has shot up over the years (Fried, Deshriver, and Mondello, 2019). The question is where will the money come from? Some might focus on broadcasting rights. Others might examine ticket sales, concession revenue, naming rights, and parking revenue for some programs. Others are looking for more exotic areas such as licensed good, Name, Image & Likeness (NIL) deals, selling shares in a team (such as Green Bay Packers selling token shares with no real value except for bragging rights), or even Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) to raise money. Another revenue source to consider is postage stamps. In fact, postage stamps are not a new revenue source, but one that might be worth examining by more countries to help support sport programming.

Postage stamps are not just for proving evidence that someone pre-paid to send a letter or package. For years governments have used postage stamps to convey various messages such as ideas/beliefs, important information, or to announce/promote a major event (Ozer, 2023). Stamps can also be used for propaganda both nationally and internationally (Ozer, 2023). Stamps have also contributed to the financing, promotion, and execution of the Olympics and Olympism (Ozer, 2023).

Traditional postage stamps have been sold with the resulting revenue going in part to pay for mail delivery and partly to sell stamps over the years to collectors with the idea being those stamps would never be used for postage- thus profit that can be

used for any potential governmental purpose. Thus, if a country prints five million stamps, sells four million and anticipates that only two million will be used then the revenue from the two million used would help defray postage related expenses (such as delivery personnel, trucks, airplanes, sorting facilities, post offices, etc...) and the revenue from the two million stamps that are not expected to be ever used can be applied to cover various expenses. This has led to a cottage industry of countries issuing stamps intended for fundraising rather than actual postage use (Slemrod, 2008). Another revenue source is semipostal stamps. For over 120 years semipostal stamps have been issued to raise funds for various causes (Semipostals, 2022). These "charity stamps" have produced significant revenue for philanthropic efforts in the health, child welfare, and social service fields for years (Miller and Terrell, 1991). The first such usage was from New South Wales in 1897 to raise funds for a home for consumptives (Miller and Terrell, 1991). Subsequent issues were issued by other countries for war injured, preventing tuberculosis, famine, and even earthquake or other disasters. The price of a semipostal stamp pays for traditional postage rate in effect at the time of purchase plus an amount to fund causes that have been determined to be in the national public interest. By law, revenue from sales (minus postage and the reasonable reimbursement of costs to the post office) is transferred to a selected agency(ies) or organization(s). Countries all over the world have issued semipostal stamps for various causes. The ability to generate funds through these stamps led one group of authors to coin a term called "stamp-based revenue generation (SbRG)" (Cohen and Altman, 2021). These causes can range from helping the needy, medical care, curing a disease, or other worthy causes. One revenue stream that might resonate with some sport fans entails issuing semipostal stamps to help fund sports.

This article will examine the push to issue stamps to generate revenue to fund sport-related activities over the years. The article starts with the history of sport stamps including various commemorative stamps. Then the article examines how several Olympic Games (Germany and Japan) leveraged stamps to help pay for the Games. Sport-related semipostal stamps are then examined in light of sending athletes to Olympic Games, to help fund youth/community sports, and other causes supported by stamp sales. A brief overview of semipostal stamps is then reviewed followed by examining postal tax stamps and Cinderella stamps. The focal point of the

article is a comprehensive study examining 920 sport-related semipostal stamps utilized to fund various efforts from the 1920s through the present time. Several countries have been at the forefront of issuing semipostal sport stamps and such efforts are covered in significant detail. What these examples show is that sport related stamps have been a successful fundraising effort (similar to coins and other Olympic trinkets such as pins) for over 100 years and show only minimal signs of decreasing.

2. History of Sport and Stamps

The first postage stamp was issued in 1841 in Great Britain, and it took over 50 years for sport themes to appear on stamps. That happened with stamps issues in 1896 to highlight the Greek Olympic Games of 1896 (Scott, 2014). Figure 1 (Scott #125-Scott Catalog numbers are used throughout this article) is a depiction of Panathinaiko Stadium used for horse racing in ancient times and refurbished for the 1896 Games.



Figure 1. A depiction of Panathinaiko Stadium

According to the official report from the 1896 Olympic Games, fundraising was very difficult, and stamps became an important element in the fundraising effort (Coubertin, Philemon, Politis, and Anninos, 1897). When the Olympics were awarded in 1894 the Greek public treasury opposed the plan as the public treasury was in a state of bankruptcy. There were no funds, let alone funds to pay for the estimated 500,000 francs it was expected to cost to host the games. Besides being in poor economic shape, Greece was reeling from the economic toll of several serious earthquakes and other calamities. There were concerns whether there could be enough public donations to support the games and due to time constraint, there was little hope the money would come in time. The lack of funds, as an example, encouraged dropping horse racing as an Olympic sport in Greece- because there was no horse racing track and no funds to build such a track. Some funds were raised through donations (subscriptions) from

individuals in Greece and Greek patriots abroad. This represented a total of 332,56 drachmas (Coubertin, Philemon, Politis, and Anninos, 1897).

Panathinaiko Stadion was intended to be used for the games but was in complete disrepair from when the stadium was built two thousand years earlier. It was estimated restoration alone (not including modernizing and upgrading) would cost 200,000 drachmas. Luckily, a wealthy Greek benefactor, M. George Averoff, came forward and agreed to pay for all the repairs. Similar to almost all games since, the budget for the restoration kept rising going up to 585,000 drachmas and then up to 920,000 drachmas. Funding was needed for other venues and event operations. While it was expected that ticket sales would generate some revenue, the host committee needed more revenue besides one major benefactor and the various subscriptions. That is why they also started selling commemorative medals. It was anticipated that between ticket sales and commemorative medals over 200,000 drachmas would be generated. That is when an agreement was reached with the Greek government would generate 400,000 for the cause through the sale of commemorative stamps. Thus, the government's contribution was not going to be from taxing people more, but through selling commemorative, Politis stamps (Coubertin, Philemon, Politis, and Anninos, 1897).

A law was passed in Greece where 50 percent of the revenue from stamp sales (after deducting expenses) would be allocated to the games fund. Based on this law, the Olympic organizers borrowed money from the National Bank of Greece secured by funds from the expected stamp sales. The stamps were a hit and the revenue generated by them helped organizers balance their budget and build the final four venues used for the games (Ozer, 2023). Thus, as early as the first Olympic games and around 50 years after the first postage stamps were issued, sports became connected with stamp collecting.

3. Commemoration

Stamps to commemorate sport achievement or draw attention to a country or its sports are common and have been used since the 1896 Greece Olympic stamp. There were future Olympic stamps issued by Greece in 1900 and 1906, but the country did not host another Olympic Games until 2004. In 1924 France issued a set of Olympic stamps and these were overprint by colonies in Lebanon and Syria. France was

hosting the VIII summer games at that time. France also hosted the first winter Olympic games in 1924. Figure 2 is a depiction of Lebanon #48 which is the original French Olympic stamp overprinted for use and sale in Lebanon.



Figure 2. Lebanon #48 issued in 1924 overprinting French Olympic stamp

One of the champions in the 1924 Olympic Games was Uruguay who won the gold in soccer. The country issued a commemorative stamp honoring the team's victory. Four years later they won the gold again and issued another commemorative stamp.

Since then, there have been numerous stamps issued to remember Olympic Games in a host country, to promote a host country, to promote teams traveling to a host country, and to honor athletes that have done well at the Olympics. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) promoted through 2017 that more than 50 million Olympic stamp series have been issued since 1896 (Tomizawa, 2017). It should be noted that the IOC promotes stamp sales because they are given a portion of stamp sales. As far back as the 1928 games, the Olympics covered 1.5% of their expenditure with philatelic related revenue (International Olympic Committee (IOC), 2022). By 1992, 137 countries issued 1.23 million stamp series and by 1996, 150 countries had issued 15 million Olympic stamps (IOC, 2022). This article though focuses on not commemorative stamps to honor the games, but rather to raise money.

4. Funding Olympics

The first stamp sold to raise money for an Olympic committee was issued by Czechoslovakia in 1925. In 1925, Czechoslovakia honored the International Olympic Congress by overprinting three of its 1923 President Masaryk semipostal stamps (Scott #B137-39). The additional revenue was divided between a fund for postal clerks and the Olympic Games Committee. 50,000 sets were issued. Figure 3 highlights this set. The primary focus of this section will be on Germany and Japan. However, there have been various countries who have issued stamps to help fund their Olympic Games or to help generate revenue for other purposes. The United States is not one of them. The US has issued Olympic stamps, but the proceeds have gone to the United States Postal Service (USPS). The USPS generated revenue through Olympic themed items sold by the post office such as T-shirts with stamps designs sold for the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. After a tense legal battle, the IOC agreed to allow the USPS to sell T-Shirts with 1996 Olympic stamp designs as long as the profits were split between the two entities (McAllister and Heath, 1996). These funds went to the USPS rather than to the Game's organizers.

One example of a country leveraging regular postage stamps to generate additional revenue was Mexico for the 1968 Olympic Games. From 1965-1968, Servicio Postal Mexicano, issued various stamp souvenir sheets with the intention of raising money from collectors rather than individuals actually using the stamps to mail something. Figure 4 shows a 1966 souvenir sheet (C320a) depicting three stamps with a face value of \$5.80, but the sheet value was \$8.70- thus generating an additional profit of \$2.90. While not every sheet had almost \$3.00 in profit, enough sheets were sold (some number over 230,000) to generate a nice profit for whomever would get the money.

5. Germany/Berlin 1936 Olympic Games

The cost for the Berlin Olympic games in 1936 was set at four million Reichsmarks. Those funds were to be raised through a national lottery, voluntary contributions, and the sale of "special Olympic postage stamps simialr to the so-called welfare stamps according to the 1936 Olympic official record (Oranisationskomittee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936, P. 43).



Figure 3. Czechoslovakia #B137-39 Olympic set

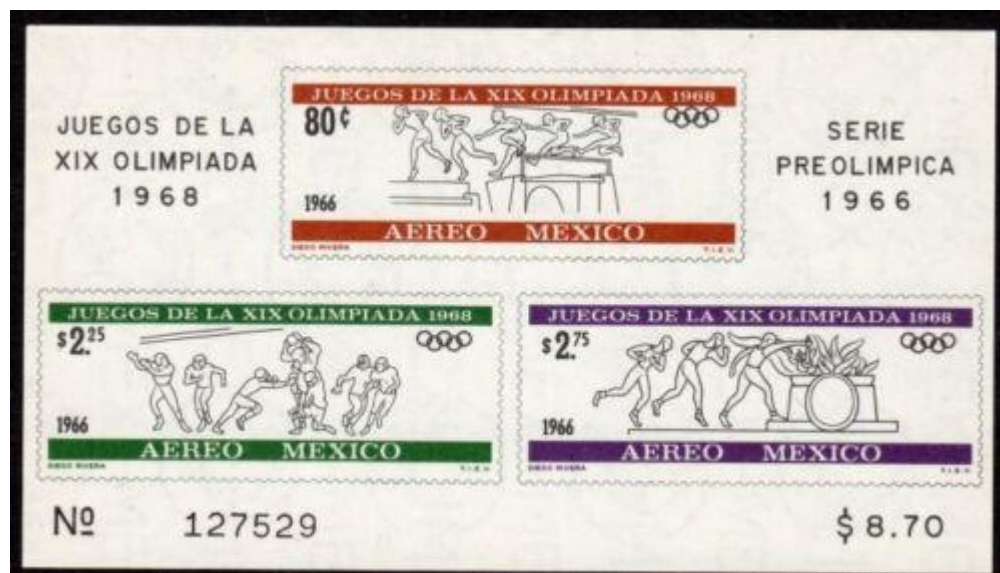


Figure 4. 1968 Mexico City Souvenir sheet

Germany had issued semi-postal stamps since 1919 (B1) for various causes such as supporting war veterans, feeding the poor, and/or winter help. The plans called for post offices to sell stamps before and during the games. Post offices were built on the Reich Sports Field and at the Olympic Village. There was also a special post office for the press and these various post offices were connected to the pneumatic letter delivery system of Greater Berlin. The pneumatic system used air pressure to move letters in tubes. The Germany post office also had mobile post offices ranging from cars to full post offices on wheels. There also were special mail carrying airplanes and they helped deliver 482,000 pieces of air mail outside Germany. During the same time 142,000 air mail letters were received- more than a 100% increase over what would have been received during the same

period. The Olympic recap highlighted 1,507 motor vehicles (ranging from motorcycles to lorries (large transportation trucks- such as 18-wheelers), to mobile post offices, to large 18 passenger vehicles) used during the Olympic Games just for postal purposes (Oranisationskomitee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936).

Special Olympic stamps were issued that included eight different denominations as well as two special postcards (for the Olympic yachting competition) See figures 5 and 6. Each stamp had a fixed supplemental value and that extra payment was used to further German athletics. The German Sport Assistance was especially active in selling stamps because they were able to benefit from the funds raised. Special cancellations were issued every day of the 16-day Olympic competition with special postmarks

also from Berlin and Kiel (where the yachting competition was held). This required a total of 193 special cancellation machines (*Oranisationskomitee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936*). While some stamp collectors prefer collecting mint stamps, others prefer stamps with special postmarks. By utilizing so many post marks the post office was able to encourage some additional stamp sales from those interested in collecting all the various special cancellations.

During the Olympics there was a significant uptick in mail service. Much of the uptick was associated with the game and specifically with collectors all over the world who wanted stamps associated with the games. For example, most of the registered letters sent during the Olympics were for the purpose of sending and cancelling postage stamps for stamp collectors. To handle the demand, 100 itinerant stamp salespeople were hired to work the games with 40 salespeople working the stadium. To speed up the sale and increase the number of stamps sold, special souvenir sheets were issued with a complete set of the eight stamps on two sheets. These souvenirs were a hot selling item at the games as over 200,000 sheets were sold during the 16 days. The German Sport Assistance cancelled 85,000 stamps alone. Among the items sold were 25,000 sheets on which each individual stamp received a different

cancellation (*Oranisationskomitee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936, P. 43*).

The Olympic Postal Bureau in one post office created a special desk to relieve the demand. That desk dealt with around 4,000 orders received each day from around the world to purchase stamps. This required over 100 people to work both day and night to process these orders during the games. Some of the requests were very specialized; requesting certain of the Olympic cancellations or all 193 different cancellations. One of the more popular cancellations were letters sent to North America aboard the Hindenburg zeppelin flights of August 5th and 16th. One firm mailed over 3,000 letters on the first flight. Other large orders include one for 4,500 postcards with Olympic themes and another German firm sent 34,000 postcards. In total the German post office processed over 50,000 orders requiring cancellation of over 1.2 million letters/postcards, 66,000 registered letters, and 1.4 million stamps were sold individually (*Oranisationskomitee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936, P. 43*). It wasn't just stamps that were sold. The Olympic Postal Bureau was responsible for additional mail coming in and leaving the Olympics. The total number of outgoing letters rose 17 million higher during the Olympics. During the same time more than 5 million letters more than normal (54 million) were received.



Figure 5. German Olympic Stamps 1936



Figure 6. sailing Olympic pre-stamped postcard



Figure 7. 1972 Munich Olympic Stamp

The received mail included 832,000 letters with incomplete or partial addresses with 69,000 of these incomplete addresses coming from outside Germany. Some letters were highlighted as being addressed to a "Mr. X, Olympic Visitor at one of the best hotels in Berlin" (Oranisationskomitee Fur Die XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936 E.V., 1936, P. 43). This was used as an example, but it could well be imagined the task of trying to deliver Olympic mail from so many foreign countries where the writing could be illegible or missing key pieces of information.

Unfortunately, the official report did not highlight how much money was generated from the semi-postal stamps. Stamps had extra values including 2, 3, 4, 4, 6, 10, 15, and 35 pfeng with the lower values being for local mail and the higher values being on airmail and registered letters. Based on rough assumptions of: 500,000 airmail stamps sold (averaging 15 pf extra per stamp), 1.2 million letters/postcards averaging 3 pf each), 66,000 registered letters (averaging 35 pf each), and 1.4 million stamps (averaging 6 pf each) the stamps sales

might have generated total extra revenue, above postage, of over 25 million pf which would translate to 251,000 Reichsmark. In 1936 there were 2.48 Reichsmark per US dollar so using this rough math the stamp sales would have raised roughly just over \$100,000 US dollars at the time.

It should be noted that Germany used semi-postal stamps to also raise money to host horse racing events and pay for sweepstakes associated with those races. Over almost a ten-year period (from 1936 to 1944) a semipostal stamp was issued every year to support the Brown Ribbon (Braune Band), an annual horse race held near Munich.

Similar stamp sales were conducted to help fund the 1972 Munich Olympic games as well. Figure 7 shows one of several souvenir sheets sold to help generate funds for those Games (B490a-d). The combined face value of the stamps is 2 Marks and if the sheet was postmarked on the first day the revenue would be primarily profit since no mail actually needed to be delivered if post marked at the post office. This was one of several series of stamps issued by West Germany for the 1972 games.

6. Japan/Tokyo 1964

In a 2017 article in the Olympian, Roy Tomizawa highlighted how stamps were a significant

element associated with fundraising for the Japanese Olympic Games in 1964 (Tomizawa, 2017). The Olympic Fund Raising Association was created in December, 1960 and it mandated that private sources should be the primary sources for raising funds for the 1964 Games. That is why Japan undertook a slew of various fundraising activities. In fact, 23 different activities were undertaken. These ranged from advertising in telephone books and trains to selling special cigarettes, holding raffles/lotteries, staging numerous spectator sporting events, and legalized gambling in motorboat, bicycle and motorcycle racing, among many other things. But stamps were the most successful fundraising effort (Tomizawa, 2017).

The Olympic Fund Raising Association raised a total of around JPY6 billion (USD16 million), and 16% or JPY963 million (USD2.7 million) of that amount was from stamps sold between 1961-1964. The second most successful effort involved advertisement sold in telephone books (JPY959 million) and then JPY800 million for revenue from gambling on bicycle racing. In contrast to stamps, commemorative medals only generated JPY140.8 million (Tomizawa, 2017). A sample souvenir sheet highlighting the commemorative stamps associated with the venues could be seen in Figure 8 (825a) and then several of the semipostal stamps are highlighted in Figure 9.



Figure 8. 1964 Japan Facility stamps and folder cover



Figure 9. semipostal stamps from Tokyo 1964



Figure 10. Portugal (RA14) 1928 Olympic funding stamp

Similar to 1964, stamps were used as a fundraising tool for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, which were postponed due to the Covid Pandemic. In its official report, Japan listed selling 4.2 million Olympic commemorative stamps, 56.4 Olympic coins, and even non-fungible tokens (NFTs) to generate revenue. Japan even issued a Sport for Peace collection in collaboration with the United Nations Postal Administration. Japan issued for the 2020 games 75 designs that included 50 stamps representing Olympic events, 23 stamps highlighting Paralympic events, and two stamps representing the Olympic logo (IOC Marketing Report, Tokyo, 2021).

As will be highlighted below in the research results section, two of the countries who have issued the most semipostal stamps to help fund Olympic efforts include Korea and Russia. Semipostal stamp

related revenue could also be used to fund other sport related efforts other than just the Olympics.

7. Sending Athletes to Olympic Games

In addition to selling stamps to fund the Olympic Games, some countries have issued stamps to help defray the costs of sending athletes to Olympic games. The first such effort was undertaken by Portugal. Portugal issued a postal tax stamp in 1928 that was mandatory to be used in addition to regular postage stamp from May 22-24, 1928 (Scott number RA14) (see figure 10). The stamp depicting a hurdler, was used to raise money to send the Portuguese Olympic team to the Amsterdam Olympic Games. From the funds raised by the sale of the 15-cent stamp, 90% went to the Olympic team and the remaining 10% went to the postal authority (Scott, 2019).

8. Funding Youth/Community Sports

Hungary issued a semipostal stamp set of eight in 1925. The stamps (B80-7) were valid from April 27, 1925 through December 31, 1925. The set depicts a variety of sports and one stamp depicting scouting. In fact, the scouting stamp is the first known postage stamp depicting scouting. There were 133,738 copies of the stamp printed both perforated and imperforate. The stamps were issued to raise funds for sports groups including Scouts. The stamps were sold for double the face value, as stated on the back of each stamp, with the surcharge going to the different sports groups. This set was one of the most expensive stamp sets ever sold to that date. The set is depicted in Image 11.

Two countries have dominated the issuance of semipostal stamps to help fund youth/community sports. They are Belgium and Germany.

Belgium had the second highest number of semipostal stamps issued for sport related purpose. Over the years (from 1920-2014, Belgium has issued 21 stamps/sets totaling 56 stamps as some sets/issue might include one stamp while others might include four or more stamps. Belgium's first sport semipostal set was issued in 1920 (B48-50) with a VII Olympic

theme as the Olympics were being held in Antwerp. While the stamps generate extra funds, those funds did not go to the Olympics, but rather the funds were used for wounded soldiers from World War I.

Belgium's next semipostal sport stamps were issued in 1950 (B480-4) and served as publicity for European Athletic Games. There is no indication how the funds were used, but Belgium sold numerous small monture souvenir sheets touting the games and generating additional funding.

Two other interesting stamps issued by Belgium included several bicycle themed racing stamps in 1963 (B736-9) with the extra funds supporting 1964 Olympic athletes. In 1966 Belgium issued another semipostal set (B791-2) which publicize swimming instruction. While it is not known where the fund went from such stamp sales, it would be a unique fundraising effort at that time if the funds went to an organization such as the Red Cross to teach water safety.

While Belgium has issued several sets and individual stamps, the country pails in connection with Germany which has the most sport fundraising semipostal stamps, and still issues more ever year.



Figure 11. Hungary 1925 (Scott B80-7) sport and Scouts funding stamps

9. Germany

German stamps have been used to fund sports for many years. The German Sport Aid Foundation offered stamp bearing certificates including the 10 Mark certificate from 1969. This was in addition to receiving funds from semipostal stamp sales for close to 50 years.

The Federal Ministry of Finance has been supporting the German Sports Aid Foundation for more than 50 years (since 1967) with the stamp series "For Sport." Funding from the brands with the "Plus" (the word used to describe these semipostal stamps because they have the given postage rate, then a plus sign, then the extra amount listed) generating almost 140 million euros since 1968. German youth and top athletes receive important financial and non-material support on the way to their athletic success from various funds including stamp sales. Supported Sporthilfe athletes are 90 percent involved in German successes in international competitions. According to the Head of b2c Fundraising for the German Sport Aid, approximately 250 million stamps have been sold over the years for fundraising efforts in Germany (C. Oelighoff, personal communication, January 17, 2023). Germany even has a web page dedicated to sport stamp fundraising: <https://www.sporthilfe.de/sportbriefmarken>.

The German government on their Federal Ministry of Finance web page (<https://www.bundesfinanzministerium.de/Web/DE/Themen/Briefmarken-Sammlermuenzen/Briefmarken/Plusmarken/mit-briefmarken-helfen.html>) – in German and translated using Google Translate) highlights that since 1949, the "Plus" brands have raised a total of more than 1 billion euros for various causes including 135 million euros for the German Sports Aid Foundation. Every year since 1968, three or four semipostal stamps are published Für den Sport." Among other things, the awards from these stamp generated funds are given towards scholarships, paying for private tuition or fills in for training-related loss of earnings.

As will be seen in the research section, German semipostal stamps include not just former West Germany, but Occupied Berlin, and East Germany stamps. In total Germany has issued 96 set/issues involving 260 stamps. This included 63 issues/sets from West Germany/current Germany involving 183 stamps from the 1930s through 2013, 14 sets/issues from Berlin involving 32 stamps from 1976-

1990, and 19 sets/issues involving 45 stamps from 1959-1980 for East Germany (DDR).

10. Sports Funding Other Causes

One interesting area was seen in three stamps that raised money for stadiums and other sport venues. While there have been many stamps issued by host countries for Olympic Games, there were only three identified stamps where the funds were for a non-Olympic stadium. These include a stadium support stamp from Burundi, a table tennis facility for Korea, and a sport facility for Surinam.

Poland had its first sport depictions in two semi-postal stamps issued in 1952. Then 16 years later the country started issuing a number of semi-postal stamps to help fund the Polish Olympic Committee. The first ones came in 1968 (B113) and then continued with stamps in 1970 (B120). Olympic committee and other organizations have received significant stamp-based funding. Semipostal sport stamps have generated funds for welfare, prize money, event administrators, athletes, and other causes over the years. Using sports to raise funds for other causes has happened and continues to happen on a regular basis. For example, numerous 5k and other runs are used to raise funds for cancer research or other medical conditions. While this article focuses on semipostal stamps, regular stamps also serve as a revenue generating source and numerous countries have issued thousands of sport related stamps, not just for the Olympics, but showing images of various athletes in the news.

One famous revenue generating effort that showed how raising funds can be complicated involved the Island nation of Grenada, a country that is prolific in issuing stamps to generate revenue as their postage needs are very limited due to a small population (Total population 113,858 on January 13, 2023 according to: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/grenada-population/>). In 1988, Pete Rose and 80 other baseball stars were depicted on Grenada stamps that were issued in sheetlets of nine stamps with a face value of 30 cents each. The stamp design contained the Cincinnati Reds and Major League Baseball logos. In April 1990, Grenada reissued the stamps and through its U.S. agent, Inter-Governmental Philatelic Corp., the stamps were offered in a supermarket promotion in Ohio, New England and western Pennsylvania.

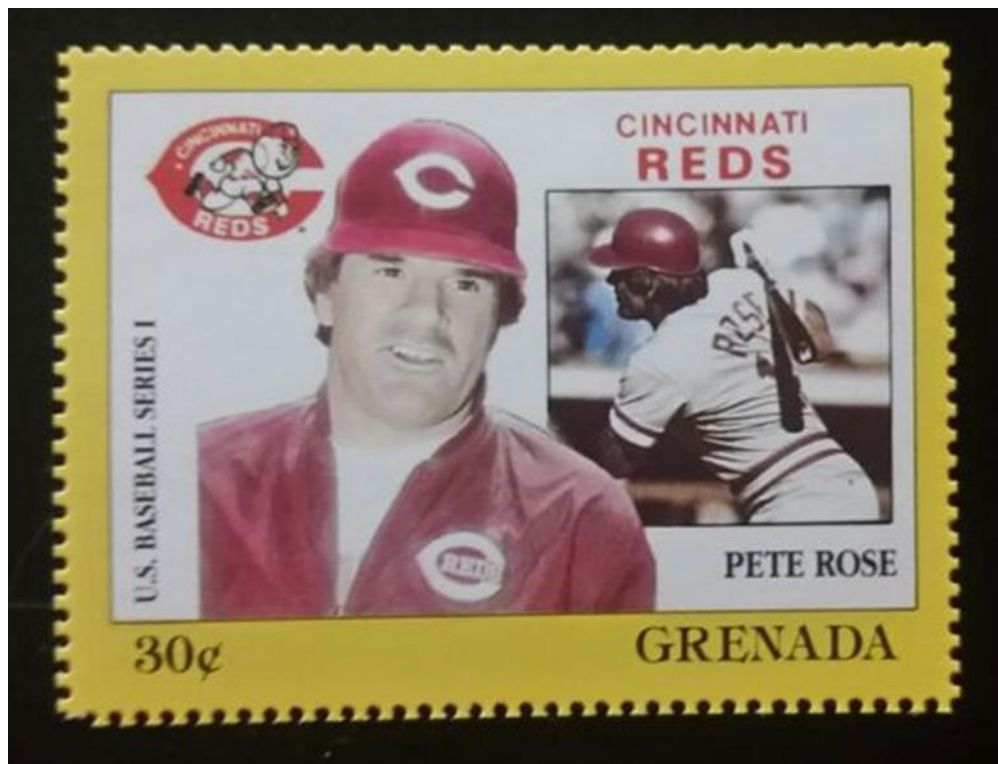


Figure 12. Grenada repealed Pete Rose stamp

Such a sale shows the stamps were not intended to be used by people in Grenada, but strictly to generate revenue from stamp and sport collectors. Customers were offered a different sheetlet every week for 10 weeks at \$1.99 each. The only difference between the 1988 and 1990 stamps was Pete Rose. The Rose stamp was omitted from the reissued sheetlets. According to MLB officials, when granting a license for Grenada to reissue the stamps, a request was made to remove the Rose stamp due to the former star player's gambling on baseball and his subsequent banishment from anything related to MLB (Sama, 1990). The stamp is depicted in figure 12.

The Grenada example helps highlight how some sport-related stamps represent a desire to generate revenue for postal authorities- just to generate a profit. Several countries issue numerous stamps, not really for postal purposes, but rather for revenue from collectors. Some examples include Anguilla, Antigua, Azerbaijan, Barbuda, Belarus, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brazil, British Antarctic Territory, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, and Burundi (Just some of the countries listed in the A-B Scott Stamp Catalog). These countries produce large numbers of stamps developed for topical collectors such as sports, Disney, space, train, cars, dogs, and cats...as examples. Many of these countries sell cancelled to order (CTO) stamps that were officially

postmarked by the country's postal authority and sold to collectors without any intent for the stamps to be used postally. Selling stamps has become a major fundraiser for some countries who churn out numerous stamps. Some small Islands in the Caribbean and Pacific are notorious for such a practice as well as some African and Asian countries. Some examples include Maldives Island (over 3,000 stamps by 2014), Marshall Islands (1,000), Micronesia (1,000), Monaco and Mongolia (2,700 each), Liberia (3,000), and the grand prize winners Russia (over 6,000) and North Korea (over 5,000 stamps from just 1946-2013). It should be noted that many wealthy countries also utilize stamps as a revenue source and produce numerous stamps with collectors as an intended market such as the United States, Canada, England, France, and Germany, as examples.

Examining the intent to generate revenue returns this article to semipostal stamps which are intentionally produced to generate revenue for specific causes. The United States is a late entry into the semipostal market, but their success can help shed a light on the value of such stamps.

11. Semipostal stamps funding various causes

Using stamps to fund various causes is not

something unique to sports. The first semipostal stamp was issued in 1897 by New South Wales. The stamp (Scott B1-B2) commemorated Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and raised money to support a home for consumptives (people with tuberculosis). Since then, semipostal stamps have been issued for numerous causes such as war orphans, injured soldiers, winter relief, drought relief, natural disaster, disease prevention/treatment, and numerous other causes. Some stamps were utilized for funding unique efforts such as several French sets for unemployed intellectuals, Austrian sets for literally "starving" artists, and a Luxembourg set from 1935 (B65A-Q) with funds going to International Fund to Aid Professionals (such as doctors and professors). While Switzerland has created several sport-related semipostal stamps, the country uses a unique sales force to help sell these stamps. Instead of stamps being sold by the post office, the Pro Juventute semipostal stamps are sold by school children who sell them to family, friends, and neighbors. Over the years these stamps annually sell over 35 million stamps and the revenue generated every year is around \$4 million that constitutes around fifty percent of the operating fund for an umbrella group representing around 3,000 child welfare agencies (Miller and Terrell, 1991).

The U.S. Postal Service issued four "semipostal" stamps available for purchase in 2023: the congressionally mandated Breast Cancer Research stamp and Save Vanishing Species stamp as well as the U.S. Postal Service's discretionary Alzheimer's stamp and Healing PTSD stamp (USPS, 2022).

The Breast Cancer Research semipostal was issued on July 29, 1998 and by the end of September 2022, more than 1.09 billion Breast Cancer Research stamps had been sold. That generated more than \$94.7 million. By law, 70 percent of the net amount raised is transferred to the National Institutes of Health and 30 percent is transferred to the Medical Research Program at the Department of Defense (USPS, 2022).

The Save Vanishing Species semipostal stamp was issued on September 20, 2011, and by October 2022, more than 62.6 million stamps had been sold. This created a revenue stream of more than \$7.2 million. For the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The money went specifically to support the Multinational Species Conservation Funds (USPS, 2022). The Save Vanishing Species stamp can be found in Figure 13. The U.S. is not alone in issuing stamps to help save animals. A 2021 journal article highlighted how stamps

represented an "untapped potential" for funding conservation efforts (Cohen and Altman, 2021). The U.S. has actually been raising money for wildlife conservation for almost 90 years.



Figure 13. US Save vanishing species semipostal stamp

In 1934 Congress authorized creating a license to hunt waterfowl with stamps (called "Duck Stamps") and to this day there are close to 1.5 million stamps sold each year and totaling over \$1 billion as of 2019 (Cohen and Altman, 2021). Besides raising money to help wildlife, the stamps still fulfill a public education awareness mission that is an ancillary important mission for the USPS (Cohen and Altman, 2021). The U.S. Is not alone in its efforts to save animals. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) has printed over 1 billion stamps and has partnered with 211 countries to issue over 1,500 different stamps to help raise money and awareness to protect animals (Cohen and Altman, 2021).

The USPS has been given the opportunity to create several discretionary semipostal stamps through the Semipostal Authorization Act, Pub. L. 106-253. The law grants the USPS authority to issue fundraising stamps that advance such causes considered to be "in the national public interest and appropriate." Two stamps have been issued so far. The Alzheimer's semipostal was issued November 30, 2017 and sales ended on January 30, 2019 based on the legal mandate. The Alzheimer's stamps resumed sale on October 5, 2020 and over the total time more than 10.2 million stamps had been sold- generating \$1.3 million. One hundred percent of the money raised has been transferred to the National Institutes of Health to support research and medical discoveries in the fight against Alzheimer's disease (USPS, 2022). The other stamp was entitled Healing PTSD and was issued December 2, 2019 and in the subsequent two plus years more than 15.5 million Healing PTSD stamps were sold. By law, 100 percent of the \$1.7 million raised through 2022 was given to the Department of

Veterans Affairs to support those suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (USPS, 2022).

Whether or not the USPS will issue any sport related stamps is yet to be seen, but several youth sport organizations (such as the National Council Youth Sports (NCYS)) are trying to generate interest in a sport related stamp to help childhood obesity and encourage kids to get active. As a point of transparency, the author is on the Board of Directors for the NCYS and is advocating for such a submission.

It should be noted that not all semipostal stamp efforts are successful. Great Britain issued a semipostal stamp in 1975 which sold for 1.5 pence over the postage value to aid the disabled. Only 5.5 million stamps were sold generating 57,000 pounds for the disabled (Miller and Terrell, 1991). Thus, there was a lot of effort spent on generating a modest return.

As can be seen by these large number of semi-postal stamps issued, they are not hard to find which makes them a common stamp. In fact, very few sport related semi-postal stamps have significant value. Because these stamps were intentionally issued in large numbers to generate revenue, they are normally easy to find and not worth that much.

12. Postal Tax Stamps

It should be noted before looking at the specific semipostal stamps used to raise money for sports, that semipostal stamps are not the only philatelic tool that can be used. Several countries utilize postal tax stamps. A postal tax stamp is a mandatory stamp (while semipostal stamps are voluntary) required by the government to be utilized

along with traditional postage to send a letter during a designated time/period. The mandate can be for a specific day or a specific month. The most prolific issuers of postal tax stamps are South American countries, Spain, Portugal, and Balkan countries (such as Serbia and Yugoslavia). Postal tax stamps are used to show payment of a compulsory tax on mailing letters and parcels and are used on letters in addition to regular postage. Postal tax stamps can be required during certain day(s), during a given event, during a given month, or during a given season. Many of the anti-tuberculosis postal tax stamps have been mandated during December as a way to generate contributions during the holiday season. Postal tax stamps are not frequently used for sport and are more likely to be found associated with charity organizations and medical related (such as anti-tuberculosis) campaigns. Serbia has issued eight sport related postal tax stamps, primarily associated with various championship events. Yugoslavia has issued 14 sport-related postal tax stamps with the focus primarily on raising funds for Olympic efforts.

13. Cinderella or Poster Stamps

In addition to official stamps, most Olympic Games have various issues generated by local and international organizations to build off the Olympic names and generate revenue. These stamps were not valid for postage but were used similar to easter seals or tuberculosis seal stamps that adorned envelopes. Figure 14 has several examples of these stamps issued for the Los Angeles Olympic Games in 1932. Another example was issued around 1940 and were called American Victory Stamps.



Figure 14. Various Cinderella stamps associated with 1932 Los Angeles Olympics



Figure 15. Stamp strip for fundraising associated with 1940 cancelled Olympics

These stamps were produced by the American Olympic Committee and sold to help the fund required to send US athletes to the 1940 Olympic games. A copy of a partial sheet can be found in Figure 15. Since the 1940 Games were cancelled due to World War II, these funds were used for other athlete related expenditures. The stamp market was also flooded with these stamps at a time when many did not have the extra funds to donate to the cause (after the Great Depression and start of another war).

14. Methodology

A thorough analysis was undertaken going through the entire Scott 2015 Standard Postage Stamp Catalogue (Volume 1-6) with each volume containing around 1,600 pages. Stamps are listed based on their purpose. Thus, for every country stamps are listed as regular postage stamps without a letter in front of the number. The next category listed with a "B" are semipostal stamps. The next category after that are "C" stamps and those are airmail stamps. Various letters continue from there such as postage due stamps starting with a "J." Thus, it is not that difficult to find the semipostal stamps as they would be after all regular postage stamps and before any airmail stamps. The process entailed going from the first A listed country through the last Z listed country and then examining all their semipostal stamps, examining the picture that might shed light on the subject matter of the stamp, reading the title given by the publisher for the stamp or stamp set, and then reading if there

was a description of the stamp/set which might shed light on why the stamp/set was issued or where the funds were designated for. Every semipostal stamp was identified if it either had a sport or Olympic theme or if it had a different theme. The catalogue would sometimes, but not always, indicate funds were being spent on sport-related causes. In addition, several countries issued postal tax stamps (an "R" designation in the catalogue) which were used for sport related events and these stamps are listed at the end of the semipostal stamps table ([Supplementary Information](#)). Also listed in this list are Mexican 1968 Olympic stamps. While these stamps are not semipostal stamps (i.e. regular postage or airmail stamps) the souvenir sheets were sold at a premium over face value to generate funds. Therefore, funds could be generated from semipostal, postal tax, and specialty stamp productions designed specifically to generate additional revenue to support sport events/organizations. All three types of stamps were analyzed.

If the stamp description indicated what the funds were used for, it would be listed in the stamp entry. Some countries issued sport-related semipostal stamps, but there is no indication where the extra money went. It is impossible to determine if those funds went to an Olympic team, to specific athletes, or a specific organization without further research which might not be documented in the case of a country that no longer exists or where the country might have been a communist country or dictatorship at one point and now has a different governmental form.

15. Analysis

The data shows that from the 1920s through 2014, 60 countries have issued semipostal sport-related stamps. Yugoslavia has issued both semipostal and postal tax stamps, so they are included in the list of 60 countries. Serbia is not part of the 60 countries as it has issued postal tax stamps focused on sports, but no semipostal stamps.

The countries with the highest number of sets/issues and stamps are highlighted in Table 1. Seven of the top ten producers of sport-related semipostal stamps are European nations.

In total, there are 920 sport-related semi postal stamps. These stamps were released in a total of 281 issues/sets. Some Issues entailed only one stamp while other issues included sets of over ten stamps. There is no one common set size. However, Germany, as an example, has been issuing stamp sets

with three or four stamps in each set. There are also 57 souvenir sheets that have been produced. The most common producer of Souvenir sheets has been Korea with 24 such sheets. In terms of when most of the stamps sets/issues were issued, Table 2 highlights a break down by decade.

This data shows that the most sets/issues were released in the 1980s, followed by the 1960s and 1990s. This might reflect that those periods in history were some of the golden years of the Olympics when there were significant rivalries such as western countries versus eastern bloc countries. Germany, at the forefront of this political divide has had stamps issued by West Germany, Occupied Berlin, and East Germany as previously discussed. The break down of stamp sets/issues and total stamps issued by Germany is highlighted in Table 3. It should be noted that in the 1950s no sets/issues or semipostal sport stamps were issued by West Germany.

Table 1 Countries Issuing Sets/Issues and Total Stamps

Country	Issue/Set	Total Stamps
Germany	96	260
Russia	6	79
Belgium	21	56
Netherland / Antilles	15	50
Romania	10	35
Korea	5	28
Hungary	13	23
Austria	8	20
Poland	11	18
Canada	4	12

Table 2 Stamp Issued by Decade

Decade	Issue/Set
1920s	4
1930s	18
1940s	26
1950s	16
1960s	48
1970s	47
1980s	58
1990s	47
2000s	21
2010s	6 (through 2014)

Table 3 West German sets/stamps

Decade	set/issues	Number of stamps
1930s	6	15
1940s	13	17
1960s	3	12
1970s	7	24
1980s	10	23
1990s	10	38
2000s	10	40
2010-13	4	14

Table 4. Sport-Related Stamp Support

Usage/Theme	Number of issues
Not indicated	137
Olympic	112
Organizations	76
Championships	56
Horse Races	13
Welfare Programs	11
Athletes	4
Stamp Exhibits	4
Venues	3
Sport Equipment	1

This data helps highlight what has been previously discussed above that in the late 1930s and 1940s Germany issued several semipostal stamps associated with horse racing. In fact, there were only 13 stamps in the study where funds went to horse racing and all those stamps were from Germany. Furthermore, the Germany government has instituted a yearly campaign to fund community sports and the numbers from the 1980s on show that every year Germany has issued sport-related semi-postal stamps. In total West Germany issued 63 sets for a total of 183 stamps. Thus, 20 percent of all documented sport-related semipostal stamps (183/920) were issued by West Germany. When the Berlin and East German (DDR) stamps are added with the West German stamps it totals 260 stamps which represents 28% of all sport-related semipostal stamps.

In terms of how the funds were used, such analysis is complicated. For example, since 1972, a percentage of all stamp-related revenue would go to the [International Olympic Committee](#). Before then, a country could create an Olympic related stamp with the five rings but use the funds for other purposes. The lack of transparency might be intentional with some countries. For other countries, it might just be that the publicity issued when the stamps were

released, was unclear as to where the funds were spent/used. Most countries release information about a stamp before the official issue data examining the theme, artist, dimensions, perforation, and other elements and such information is collected by the Scott Catalogue Company and used to produce their stamp listings.

Because a stamp might fit several categories, the numbers are not completely accurate for each set/issue. As an example, a stamp might have an Olympic theme, but there is no indication as to if the funds went to athletes, teams, Olympic organizations, or some other source. Thus, that issue would be categorized as no indication as well as Olympic theme. It should be noted that four issues focused on stamp exhibitions where sport-related stamp themes were used to raise money for a stamp show. Table 4 shows the stamp themes or indication of how funds were utilized.

Besides the funds usage not being mentioned (so the Catalogue editors do not know or did not list how funds were used), the most common usage has been for the Olympics, which could possibly apply to building Olympic venues, supporting Olympic teams, or leveraging the popularity of the Olympics to generate funds for other purposes. After the Olympics came

various organizations. This category could be an Olympic Committee, national sport organization, local sport organization, organizations that produce sporting events, or event wellness-related organizations. A good number of the stamp sets/issues in the organization category are from Germany where the funds are given to a national sporting organization for distribution. The last major category entailed championships. These stamps either promoted a championship (other than the Olympics) or were used to help fund such championships. Some of the major events included the World Cup or major skiing championships. One issue specifically indicated that the proceeds were to be used to purchase sport-related equipment.

16. Discussion

Sports can be very expensive. The Olympic games used to cost millions of dollars and now cost many billions. It is estimated that the 2020 (held in 2021 due to the Pandemic) Japanese Olympics cost \$12.9 billion (Coliseum, 2023). The only truly profitable Games have been in the United States. That was the 1984 Olympics which were privately funded and generated a profit of over \$230 million in part due to the need to build only two new venues. All other venues already existed (Mojica, 2020). In contrast, most other hosts needed to raise money from various sources to host the games and collectibles were one of the primary sources, and will continue to be a major revenue source. Stamps and stamped cards have been a major part of that fundraising effort. Stamps have also been used to generate funds to support athletes, support Olympic teams, fund youth/recreational sports, build venues, and fund other efforts. While several recent Olympics such as the Korean and Russian Games have utilized significant numbers of semipostal stamps, the total amount now raised by stamp sales will pale in comparison to the huge billion-dollar broadcast and sponsorship deals. However, when so much is at stake with hosting the Olympics, every bit counts and stamps serve not just to generate revenue, but can help promote a country similar to how 30 of Russia's semipostal stamps for the 1980 Olympics were promoting Olympic related tourism to the country.

While it would be impossible to determine how much money has been raised to date from sport-related semipostal stamps, if we assume that Germany has raised 140 million Euros since 1968 with their stamps and Germany has close to 20% of all sport-

related semipostal stamps then a rough estimate would be five times that amount or around 700 million Euros (in 2023 dollars that would be around \$700 million US). Thus, a significant amount of money could have been raised for sports around the world. It should be noted that not all sport-related semipostal stamp efforts are successful. Canada sold semipostal sport stamps in 1974-76 when the country hosted the 1976 Olympic Games. The Olympic coin effort generated over \$386 million in revenue (\$100 million profit) from the 26 different silver coins produced by the Canadian government. In contrast, the 12 semipostal stamps were not able to generate the goal of \$10 million profit to help support the Games (Fried, 2015).

While stamp collecting might not be as popular today as it was 30-40 years ago, there are lessons that can be learned associated with other collectibles to help generate necessary funds. Even in an age where people are not using the mail as frequently, people are still communicating it other ways. To keep up with how people are using texting, emails, and social media account, maybe a future trend will be pivot away from sport-related semipostal stamps to sport-related memes or badges that can be produced, traded, used in signature lines, and other strategies as a way to show support for a sport-related cause, whether Olympics, a championship, or community sports.

17. Conclusion

When people look at stamps, they might not consider these little pieces of art to be anything more than just proof that someone paid to mail something. However, stamps can tell many stories, such as about a famous time in history, an important person, or a major holiday. Stamps can also be utilized to generate propaganda, serve a political purpose, or even to make money. This article has examined how sport-related semipostal stamps have been used all over the world in 60 countries and now over 920 individual stamps. These stamps have raised millions of dollars and have been a major fundraising effort in major sporting events such as the Olympics. While mail volume has declined with the advancement of email and social media advertising, there is still an interest in generating revenue through stamps and while the total numbers might decline, stamps will still serve as a vehicle to raise funds and awareness.

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Does this article pass screening for similarity?

Yes

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