

= Johnny Evers =

John Joseph Evers ( July 21 , 1881 ? March 28 , 1947 ) was an American professional baseball second baseman and manager . He played in Major League Baseball ( MLB ) from 1902 through 1917 for the Chicago Cubs , Boston Braves , and Philadelphia Phillies . He also appeared in one game apiece for the Chicago White Sox and Braves while coaching them in 1922 and 1929 , respectively .

Evers was born in Troy , New York . After playing for the local minor league baseball team for one season , Frank Selee , manager of the Cubs , purchased Evers 's contract and soon made him his starting second baseman . Evers helped lead the Cubs to four National League pennants , including two World Series championships . The Cubs traded Evers to the Braves in 1914 ; that season , Evers led the Braves to victory in the World Series , and was named the league 's Most Valuable Player . Evers continued to play for the Braves and Phillies through 1917 . He then became a coach , scout , manager , and general manager in his later career .

Known as one of the smartest ballplayers in MLB , Evers also had a surly temper that he took out on umpires . Evers was a part of a great double @-@ play combination with Joe Tinker and Frank Chance , which was immortalized as " Tinker @-@ to @-@ Evers @-@ to @-@ Chance " in the poem " Baseball 's Sad Lexicon " . Evers was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Veterans Committee in 1946 .

= = Early life = =

Evers was born on July 21 , 1881 , in Troy , New York . His father worked as a saloon keeper . Many of Evers ' relatives , including his father , brothers , and uncles , played baseball . Evers attended St. Joseph 's Elementary School and played sandlot ball in Troy .

= = Career = =

= = = Minor league career = = =

Evers made his professional debut in minor league baseball for the Troy Trojans of the Class @-@ B New York State League in 1902 as a shortstop . Evers reportedly weighed less than 100 pounds ( 45 kg ) , and opposing fans thought he was a part of a comedic act . Evers reportedly weighed no more than 130 pounds ( 59 kg ) during his career .

Evers batted .285 and led the New York State League with 10 home runs . Frank Selee , manager of the Chicago Cubs , scouted Evers 's teammate , pitcher Alex Hardy . Selee , also looking for a second baseman due to an injury to starter Bobby Lowe , purchased Hardy 's and Evers 's contracts for \$ 1 @,@ 500 ( \$ 41 @,@ 025 in current dollar terms ) ; the Trojans were willing to sell Evers 's services due to his temper and many errors made in the field .

= = = Chicago Cubs = = =

Evers made his MLB debut with the Cubs on September 1 at shortstop , as Selee moved Joe Tinker from shortstop to third base . Only three players in the National League ( NL ) were younger than Evers : Jim St. Vrain , Jimmy Sebring , and Lave Winham . Three days later , Selee returned Tinker to shortstop and assigned Evers to second base . In his month @-@ long tryout with the Cubs , Evers batted .222 without recording an extra @-@ base hit and played inconsistent defense . However , Lowe 's injury did not properly heal by spring training in 1903 , allowing Evers to win the starting job for the 1903 season . Lowe recovered during the 1903 season , but Evers ' strong play made Lowe expendable ; Evers finished third in the NL in fielding percentage among second basemen ( .937 ) , and finished fifth in assists ( 245 ) and putouts ( 306 ) . The Cubs sold Lowe to the Pittsburgh Pirates after the season . Evers played 152 games in the 1904 season . Defensively ,

his 518 assists and 381 putouts led the NL , though his 54 errors led all NL second basemen .

During the 1906 season , Evers finished fifth in the NL with 49 stolen bases , and led the league with 344 putouts and led all second basemen with 44 errors . The Cubs won the NL pennant in 1906 , but lost the 1906 World Series to the Chicago White Sox four games to two ; Evers batted 3 @-@ for @-@ 20 ( .150 ) in the series . During the 1907 season , Evers led the NL with 500 assists . The Cubs repeated as NL champions in 1907 , and won the 1907 World Series over the Detroit Tigers , four games to none , as Evers batted 7 @-@ for @-@ 20 ( .350 ) .

During the 1908 pennant race , Evers alerted the umpires to Fred Merkle 's baserunning error in a game against the New York Giants , which became known as " Merkle 's Boner " . Al Bridwell hit what appeared to be the game @-@ winning single for the Giants , while Merkle , the baserunner on first base , went to the clubhouse without touching second base . Evers called for the ball , and the umpire ruled Merkle out . NL president Harry Pulliam ruled the game a tie , with a makeup to be played . The Cubs won the makeup game , thereby winning the pennant . The Cubs then won the 1908 World Series over Detroit , four games to one , as Evers again batted 7 @-@ for @-@ 20 ( .350 ) . For the 1908 season , Evers had a .300 batting average , good for fifth in the NL , and a .402 on @-@ base percentage , second only to Honus Wagner .

Evers drew 108 walks during the 1910 season , trailing only Miller Huggins . However , Evers missed the end of the season with a broken leg . Without Evers , the Cubs won the NL pennant , but lost the 1910 World Series to the Philadelphia Athletics , four games to one . Evers agreed to manage the Navy Midshipmen , a college baseball team , in 1911 , despite the opposition of Cubs ' manager Frank Chance . He experienced a nervous breakdown in 1911 ; returning to the Cubs later in the season , he played in only 46 games that year . Evers indicated that this was a result of a business deal that cost Evers most of his savings . Evers rebounded to bat .341 in 1912 , good for fourth in the NL , and he led the NL with a .431 on @-@ base percentage . Team owner Charles W. Murphy named Evers manager in 1913 , signing him to a five @-@ year contract , succeeding Chance .

= = = Boston Braves and Philadelphia Phillies = = =

After the 1913 season , Evers was offered \$ 100 @,@ 000 ( \$ 2 @,@ 394 @,@ 276 in current dollar terms ) to jump to the Federal League , but he opted to take less money to remain with the Cubs . In February 1914 , after Evers signed his players to contracts , Murphy fired Evers as manager and traded him to the Boston Braves for Bill Sweeney and Hub Perdue . Murphy insisted that Evers had resigned as manager , which Evers denied . Evers insisted he was a free agent , but the league assigned him to the Braves . He signed a four @-@ year contract at \$ 10 @,@ 000 per season ( \$ 236 @,@ 246 in current dollar terms ) , with a \$ 20 @,@ 000 signing bonus .

During the 1914 season , the Braves fell into last place of the eight @-@ team NL by July 4 . However , the Braves came back from last place in the last ten weeks of the season to win the NL pennant . Evers ' .976 fielding percentage led all NL second basemen . The Braves defeated the Philadelphia Athletics in the 1914 World Series , four games to none , as Evers batted 7 @-@ for @-@ 16 ( .438 ) . Evers won the Chalmers Award , the forerunner of the modern @-@ day Most Valuable Player award , ahead of teammate Rabbit Maranville .

Evers was limited in 1915 by injuries , and also served suspension for arguing with umpires . After a poor season in 1916 , Evers began the 1917 season with a .193 batting average . Due to Evers ' declining performance , the Braves placed Evers on waivers at mid @-@ season , and he was claimed by the Philadelphia Phillies . Evers rejected an offer to become manager of the Jersey City Skeeters of the International League that offseason . He signed with the Boston Red Sox as a player @-@ coach for the 1918 season , but was released without playing a game for them . Not receiving another offer from an MLB team , Evers traveled to Paris as a member of the Knights of Columbus to promote baseball in France .

= = = Coaching and managing career = = =

Evers joined the New York Giants during the 1920 season , serving as a coach . He managed the Cubs again in 1921 , succeeding Fred Mitchell . With the team struggling , Evers was fired in August and replaced with Bill Killefer . The Cubs finished seventh out of eight in the NL that season .

Evers served as a coach for the Chicago White Sox in 1922 and 1923 . He returned to second base in 1922 , filling in for an injured Eddie Collins . Evers played in one game for the White Sox as Collins recovered .

Evers was named the White Sox acting manager for the 1924 season , succeeding Chance , who was ordered home due to poor health . However , Evers suffered from appendicitis during the season , missing time during the year , and the White Sox opened up a managerial search when Chance died in September . The White Sox replaced Evers with Collins after the season .

Evers rejoined the Braves as a scout . As Braves owner Emil Fuchs sold manager Rogers Hornsby to the Cubs and assumed managerial duties himself for the 1929 season , Fuchs hired Evers as a coach . Fuchs had no experience as a field manager , and so Evers became captain of the Braves , directing the team during the game and dealing with umpires . Evers and fellow coach Hank Gowdy played in one game in the 1929 season , coming into the bottom of the ninth inning on October 6 , 1929 . In the process , Evers became the oldest player in the league for the year .

Evers remained a coach for the Braves under Bill McKechnie , who succeeded Fuchs as field manager in 1930 , and served in the role through 1932 . He continued to scout for the Braves , and then became general manager of the Albany Senators of the New York ? Pennsylvania League in 1935 . He resigned from Albany at the end of the season . Over his managerial career , he posted a 180 ? 192 record .

= = Personal = =

Evers married Helen Fitzgibbons . His son , John J. Evers , Jr . , served as a Lieutenant in World War II , assigned to the Pacific Theater of Operations . When his son was 11 years old , Evers bought part of the Albany Senators and gave him the stock . Evers ' brother , Joe Evers , and uncle , Tom Evers , also played in MLB . His great @-@ nephew is Sports Illustrated writer Tim Layden .

Though Evers and Tinker were part of one of the most successful double @-@ play combinations in baseball history , the two despised each other off of the field . They went several years without speaking to each other after one argument . When Chance once named Tinker the smartest ballplayer he knew , Evers took it as a personal affront .

= = Later life = =

Evers operated a sporting goods store in Albany , New York in 1923 . However , Evers lost his money and filed for bankruptcy in 1936 . The store was passed down to Evers ' descendants . He also worked as superintendent of Bleecker Stadium in Albany and spent time teaching baseball to sandlot players .

Evers suffered a stroke in August 1942 , which paralyzed the right side of his body . He remained bedridden or confined to a wheelchair for most of the next five years . Evers died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1947 at St. Peter 's Hospital in Albany .

= = Legacy = =

Evers retired in 1918 , having batted .300 or higher twice in his career , stolen 324 bases and scored 919 runs . He frequently argued with umpires and received numerous suspensions during his career . His combative play and fights with umpires earned him the nickname " The Human Crab " .

Evers served as the pivot man in the " Tinker @-@ to @-@ Evers @-@ to @-@ Chance " double @-@ play combination , which inspired the classic baseball poem " Baseball 's Sad Lexicon " , written by New York Evening Mail newspaper columnist Franklin Pierce Adams in July 1910 . Evers , Tinker , and Chance were all inducted in the Hall of Fame in the same year .

The Merkle play remains one of the most famous in baseball history . The ball used in the Merkle

play was sold at an auction in the 1990s for \$ 27 @, @ 500 , making it one of the four most valuable baseballs based on purchase price . Evers ' role in Merkle 's boner cemented his legacy as a smart ballplayer .

Evers is mentioned in the poem " Line @-@ Up for Yesterday " by Ogden Nash :