

# Troy Baseball Legend, Evers

By Craig Muder

At 5-foot-9 and 125 pounds, Johnny Evers might seem out of place with the 200-pound infielders on today's big league baseball diamonds.

But in the first years of the 20th Century, the acrobatic Evers excelled at the "Inside Baseball" style of play that dominated the time – featuring bunting, stolen bases and hit-and-runs – and led his teams to four National League pennants and three World Series titles.

Born in Troy, on July 21, 1881, Evers – a name that rhymed with "beavers" though he came to also accept the pronunciation that rhymed with "feathers" – made his big league debut at the age of 21 in 1902 with the Chicago Cubs. Evers established himself as the Cubs' starting second baseman in 1903 – teaming with shortstop Joe Tinker and first baseman Frank Chance to form one of the best infield combinations of the era.

In 1906, the Cubs dominated the NL from start to finish, winning 116 games against only 36 losses. The 116 wins have been matched since only by the 2001 Seattle Mariners, and no team has matched the Cubs' .763 winning percentage of 1906.

Evers hit .255 that season, but drove in 51 runs and stole 49 bases. His spectacular infield defense – combined with that of Tinker, Chance and the other members of the Cubs – resulted in Chicago allowing just 381 runs for the entire season.

The Cubs lost the 1906 World Series to the White Sox but won the Fall Classic in 1907 and 1908. In 1910, Evers – along with Tinker and Chance – became immortalized in the poem "Baseball's Sad Lexicon," written by newspaper man Franklin P. Adams – a reporter who worked for the *New York Evening Mail* and closely followed the Cubs' main rival, the New York Giants.

Adams marveled at the trio's ability to turn double plays and convert hot smashes into easy outs:

These are the saddest of possible words:  
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."  
Trio of bear cubs, and fleetier than birds,  
Tinker and Evers and Chance.  
Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon bubble,  
Making a Giant hit into a double –  
Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:  
"Tinker to Evers to Chance."

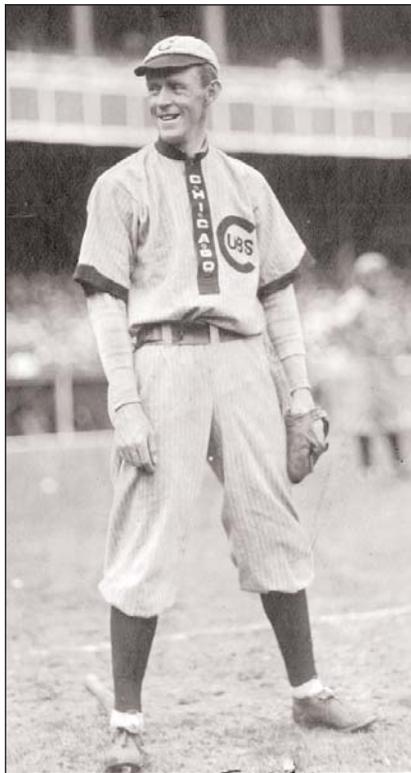
After the 1913 season, the Cubs traded Evers to the Boston Braves – who had finished fifth in the NL in 1913. But with Evers as their everyday second baseman in 1914, the Braves caught fire in the second half of the season and stormed to the pennant, earning the nickname "Miracle Braves."

Against the heavily favored Philadelphia Athletics in the 1914 World Series, Evers hit .438 as the Braves swept the series in four games.

For his efforts in 1914, Evers was named the National League winner of the Chalmers Award, which served as a most valuable player award for each league.

Evers played in parts of five more seasons after 1914, ending his career with a .270 batting average, 1,659 hits and 324 stolen bases. He managed the Cubs in 1913 as a player/manager, and also managed the Cubs in 1921 and the White Sox in 1924.

Evers was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946. He passed away in on March 28, 1947, and was buried in his hometown of Troy.



**Johnny Evers**



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*Craig Muder is the director of communications for the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Image provided by the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. This is one of a series written for the NYNPA - Newspaper In Education. All rights reserved 2011.*