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## The Legend of Honus Wagner

Johannes Peter "Honus" Wagner (February 24, 1874 – December 6, 1955), nicknamed "The Flying Dutchman" due to his superb speed and German heritage ("Dutch" in this instance being an alteration of "Deutsch"), was an American Major League Baseball shortstop. He played in the National League from 1897 to 1917, almost entirely for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Wagner won eight batting titles, tied for the most in NL history with Tony Gwynn. He also led the league in slugging six times, and in stolen bases five times.

In 1936, the Baseball Hall of Fame inducted Wagner as one of the first five members. He received the second-highest vote total, behind Ty Cobb and tied with Babe Ruth. Although Cobb is frequently cited as the greatest player of the dead-ball era, some contemporaries regarded Wagner as the better all-around player, and most baseball historians consider Wagner to be the greatest shortstop ever. Cobb himself called Wagner "maybe the greatest star ever to take the diamond."

Yet, today, he's famous to most Americans because the T206 Honus Wagner baseball card (pictured below) is the most well known and most expensive baseball card in the world. There are 57 known copies and there are many other cards that only have 1 or 2 known examples depicting Wagner. The card was designed and issued by the American Tobacco Company (ATC) from 1909 to 1911 as part of its T206 series. Wagner refused to allow production of his baseball card to continue, either because he did not want children to buy cigarette packs to get his card, or because he wanted more compensation from the ATC. The ATC ended production of the Wagner card and a total of only 50 to 200 cards were ever distributed to the public.

In 1933, the card was first listed at a price value of US\$50 in Jefferson Burdick's The American Card Catalog, making it the most expensive baseball card in the world at the time. A near-mint-condition T206 Wagner card sold in 2007 for \$2.8 million, the highest price ever for a baseball card. [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honus\\_Wagner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honus_Wagner)] [matchcover is a Giant Feature]

