



# The Fabulous Mr. D

*For more than 25 years of service to Met Area golf, Paul Dillon is awarded the MGA's highest honor*

BY JEFF DAY

PHOTO BY ANDREW LEVINE

**Y**ou don't need to have a conversation with Paul Dillon to recognize how much he cares about golf. All it takes is a look at his paintings—and chances are you have seen one in a Met Area clubhouse. With careful brush strokes and the perfect use of color, the gentle features of an honored volunteer or the determination of a great player come to life and exude a love and deep respect for the game that leave an indelible impression on the viewer.

Knowing the man behind the canvas has the same effect. Dillon's warmth and compassion have had a tremendous impact on countless golfers and non-golfers alike, and this legacy is just one of many reasons he is being honored with the 2010 MGA Distinguished Service Award.

**Coach Dillon, in center, with his 2010-'11 Fordham University golf team.**

Dillon, 75, grew up in New Rochelle, N.Y., and was first exposed to golf through a summer caddying job as a teenager. However, it wasn't until he was 23 that he played his first round of golf, and he took to it right away.

After attending Iona College, Dillon began a 30-year career with the Union Camp Corporation, which is now part of International Paper. At age 32, he officially put golf on hold so that he and his wife of nearly 50 years, Mary Ellen, could raise their six children—including actors Matt and Kevin—in Mamaroneck, N.Y. It was at the age of 45 when he rediscovered the game and became a member at Wykagyl Country Club. In

1987, he joined Winged Foot Golf Club and has been an active member ever since.

Dillon's volunteer service with the Westchester Golf Association and the MGA began in the early 1990s. He served as president of the WGA from 1994-'95, and later as president of its highly successful Caddie Scholarship Fund, to which he still devotes his time and talents. Rob Bluestone, president of the WGA and friend to Mr. Dillon for many years, notes: "Paul Dillon is the quintessential sportsman and humanitarian. Fortunately, golf is his sport and every life that Paul has touched, which is to say nearly everyone he has met, is the better for it."

His infectious personality and determination to spread golf's values and traditions to the next generation also led to his rise through the ranks of the MGA, which included a post as chairman of the public links committee and culminated with two terms as Association president and MGA Foundation chairman (2003-'04). He was also instrumental in launching the MGA Foundation's Capital Campaign, and served as its co-chairman with Lowell Schulman. The success of the Campaign and Dillon's tireless enthusiasm helped fuel the continued growth of the Foundation's cornerstone junior programs, GOLF-WORKS and The First Tee.

Dillon is just as active outside of the MGA and WGA, and is now in his 16th season as the head coach of the Fordham University men's golf team. Honored as the 2004 Atlantic 10 Coach of the Year, Dillon takes pride in helping his players improve as golfers and, more importantly, develop into responsible and respected adults. Each year, alumni come back to play in the "Dillon Bowl" at Winged Foot,



**Dillon painted three-time MGA major winner Johnson Wagner in 2002 (below left), and presented Gary Player with a portrait in 2008.**

a testament to the strong bonds formed through his leadership.

For all of Dillon's many contributions to the game, nowhere do his skills and passions converge more perfectly than on canvas. He is the Met Area's most prolific and celebrated golf artist, having painted, and donated, hundreds of portraits of the game's greatest players and personalities that hang in clubhouses, offices, museums and homes across the country. Besides some of the biggest names in golf, Dillon has painted six Roman Catholic Cardinals, former New York Governor Hugh Carey, and Bobby Kennedy. His yearly portraits of the award recipients of the MGA and Metropolitan Golf Writers Association

have become a cherished tradition for both the associations and the honorees, and each year he paints portraits of his outgoing Fordham seniors.

Whenever the MGA or WGA needs a respected ambassador for the game, Dillon is the first name on speed dial. Outgoing MGA president Al Small says of Dillon, "During the course of your life you may meet a handful of people that you love and that also inspire you. Paul—the artist, coach, leader, and friend—is that person to me!"

Dillon's contributions to the game and continuing efforts to ensure that its traditions are passed on to the next generation make him a most deserving recipient of the MGA's most prestigious honor. ■

