



Peter Pan winner Casino Drive seeks historic three-peat

by **Rommy Faversham**

Interest in the 140th Belmont Stakes (G1) on June 7 has been stimulated by Japanese-owned Casino Drive, the overpowering 5¾-length winner of the 1½-mile Peter Pan Stakes (G2) on May 10.



Adam Coglianese/NYRA photo

The three-year-old Mineshaft colt was making his stakes debut in only his second lifetime start. Facing maidens in February at Kyoto Racecourse in Japan, Casino Drive cruised to an 11½-length triumph.

His latest effort at Belmont Park may have marked him as the most formidable roadblock between unbeaten Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (G1) hero Big Brown and a Triple Crown sweep, a pinnacle not reached in 30 years.

Then again, Belmont Stakes-bound Casino Drive and his enterprising connections have ventured to

CASINO DRIVE

New York in an attempt to forge their own unique stamp on racing and breeding history.

The chestnut colt will attempt to become an unprecedented third straight Belmont Stakes winner out of 2007 Broodmare of the Year Better Than Honour, following Jazil, by Seeking the Gold, in 2006 and three-year old champion filly Rags to Riches, by A.P. Indy, last year.

Bred in Kentucky by Shell Bloodstock, Casino Drive was purchased by Nobutaka Tada for \$950,000 on behalf of owner Hidetoshi Yamamoto at the 2006 Keeneland September yearling sale.

His dam, the Deputy Minister mare Better Than Honour, was a Grade 2 winner at two and multiple Grade 1-placed at age three. She is out of 1982 Kentucky Oaks (G1) heroine Blush With Pride.

Casino Drive has a pair of younger half brothers by Giant's Causeway, including an unraced two-year-old colt named Man of Iron.

His immediate family is anchored by his third dam, 1982 Broodmare of the Year Best in Show, whose clan has already become one of the most celebrated in the world.

Casino Drive hails from the first crop of the A.P. Indy stallion Mineshaft, the 2003 Horse of the Year.

A victory by Casino Drive in the Belmont Stakes would make Better Than Honour the first known broodmare in history to produce the winners of the same classic venue for three consecutive years.

The mare that has come closest to that feat is the Spearmint mare Fausta, winner of the 1914 Italian Derby and Oaks. Owned and trained by master horseman Federico Tesio, Fausta produced three colts by

Casino Drive, ch. c., 2005				
Mineshaft 99 120 fls, 3 SWs SI 2.01 DI=3.00	A.P. Indy 89 8 wins, \$2,979,815 Champion 900 fls, 111 SWs SI 4.04 DI=2.54	Seattle Slew 74 1050 fls, 114 SWs SI 4.76 DI=2.14	Bold Reasoning 68 Reason to Earn 63 Poker 63 Fair Charmer 59	
		Weekend Surprise 80 14 fls, 4 SWs DI=2.64	Secretariat 70 Somethingroyal 52 Buckpasser 63 Gay Missile 67	
	Prospectors Delite 89 6 wins, \$432,953, SW 5 fls, 5 SWs DI=2.54	Mr. Prospector 70 1178 fls, 181 SWs SI 5.08 DI=3.95	Raise a Native 61 Gold Digger 62	Native Dancer 50 Raise You 46 Nashua 52 Sequence 46
Better Than Honour 96 6 fls, 3 SWs DI=2.00	Deputy Minister 79 12 wins, \$696,964 Champion 1141 fls, 89 SWs SI 3.23 DI=3.67	Vice Regent 67 672 fls, 105 SWs SI 2.83 DI=3.86	Northern Dancer 61 Nearctic 54 Natalma 57	
		Mint Copy 70 7 fls, 1 SW DI=7.00	Victoria Regina 58 *Mentriercr 44 Victoriana 52	
	Blush With Pride 79 6 wins, \$536,807, SW 15 fls, 3 SWs DI=1.71	Blushing Groom (Fr) 74 512 fls, 92 SWs SI 4.76 DI=1.52	Bunty's Flight 53 Shakney 64	Bunty Lawless 35 Broomflight 47 Jabneh 52 Grass Shack 51 *Nasrullah 40 Spring Run 48
		Best in Show 65 17 fls, 4 SWs DI=0.87	Red God 54 Runaway Bride (GB) 62 Traffic Judge 52 Stolen Hour 53	=Wild Risk (Fr) 40 =Aimee (GB) 57 *Alibhai 38 Traffic Court 38 Mr. Busher 46 Late Date 29

Signorino—Meissonier, Michelangelo, and Melozzo Da Forli—winners of the Italian Derby in 1919, '21, and '22, respectively.

What are the random odds of a contemporary American broodmare producing three consecutive winners of the Belmont Stakes? One ballpark estimate would be the annual United States foal crop to the third power, which comes out to about 40-trillion-to-1. A longshot of astronomical proportions made possible by one remarkable broodmare.

Rommy Faversham is a pedigree specialist and author living in Los Angeles. More of his work is available at <http://www.equicross.com>.

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