

BMW Championship

Sunday, August 20, 2023

Olympia Fields, Illinois, USA

Olympia Fields Country Club

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome our champion, 2023 BMW Championship winner Viktor Hovland. Congratulations on a remarkable victory. That final round was pretty impressive. I'll run through a couple of things first before we get a comment from you. 61 in the final round, it's the low round by a winner this season on TOUR. It's also the lowest final round in the FedExCup Playoffs history. It's your career low round. The 28 on the back nine is your career low nine-hole score. It's your fifth win on TOUR and your second this season following the Memorial. It's quite a resume.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's it?

Q. How are you feeling after that dramatic finish?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that was cool. I didn't think too much about all those things. I just kind of kept on focusing shot for shot and got closer to Fitzy and Scottie and just kept pouring it on, and now we're here.

Yeah, haven't had a lot of time to process it, to be honest.

Q. Five victories in your career and two this season. Solid playing.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Thank you. To win at a place like this and amongst the best players in the world, it's pretty cool, and to do it that way, making seven birdies the last nine holes, and yeah, to beat those guys, that was pretty cool.

Q. Just some super quick housekeeping. What were the irons you hit on 17 and 18?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I hit a 9-iron into 17, and I hit a pitching wedge into 18.

Q. At what point, even though you're starting to pile up some birdies, at what point did winning or catching Scottie and Matt get into your head?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Honestly, I didn't really -- obviously I



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wanted to win, but when I made the putt on 15 for birdie, I felt like, okay, we've got a chance now if I can finish pretty well, then you never know what's going to happen behind you.

Then when I made a birdie on 17, I was feeling really good, and then the birdie on 18, as well, I felt like I could win it outright.

But it wasn't until then, I had no idea what was going on. I was just going to try to play well and keep making birdies.

Q. When you get in a flow like that, in baseball if somebody has got a perfect game going, nobody talks to them that they're sort of afraid to say anything. Is it the same in golf? Are you people sort of afraid to say anything to you, and if they did say anything, would you even hear them?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I can't speak for what other guys are scared to say, but Rory and I were chatting a little bit coming down the stretch. I didn't feel like that interrupted whatever zone I was in. It was just kind of -- I think it's nice to chat about other things to kind of keep you a little mellow and not think too much about what you need to do. Obviously that's where your mind is focused at. You want to hit the tee shot in the fairway, hit the iron shot close and make the putt, but I think it's a nice balance to talk to your caddie, talk to your playing partner, and yeah, take your mind a little bit away from that.

Q. What did you talk about?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I honestly don't remember at this point. I mean, it was just stupid things. Just chatting about anything really. It seemed to help, I guess.

Q. When you won Memorial, you won it with a lot of different things, including a short game that you said improved, but it seemed like ball-striking was the thing especially today. Could you talk about how well you've been hitting the ball all year.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, this was really cool to be able to win at this golf course without -- I had a quick glance at my stats, and I guess I lost a little bit around the green.

To win by doing that at this golf course, that means that

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you've hit the ball really well and putted it really well, and that's what I've done this week.

At Memorial, I think Jack's course is one of those courses where it's just set up to not beat it, if that makes sense. You can play really well and easily miss half of the fairways and miss half of the greens. It's just one of those that's just really tough. Whereas Olympia Fields I think is a lot more straightforward, if you will. It's still really, really hard, but I hit the ball really straight, so I hit a lot of fairways and I hit a lot of greens, and my putter just caught on fire the last couple days. Here we are.

Q. I think you said out there with Amanda that this probably was the best round of golf you've ever played given the circumstances. Could you just maybe review that thought again, just how good this was for you.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it was awesome. I've gotten off to a nice start every single day, and I was 3-under through five holes. I felt like I was in a good spot. But bogeying 7 after kind of a bad break off the tee shot, getting stuck in the lip, in the rough, just over the bunker, and made a bogey there. Missed kind of a nice putt for birdie on 8 and had a pitching wedge in on 9 but didn't get that one close.

It felt like it was just going to be one of those days like the other days where I've gotten off to a nice start and kind of just played okay and shot 68 or 67 or 66, which is a nice score, but after making that turn, stuffed it on 10, hit it close on 11, stuffed it on 12, and that's when I kind of felt like I hit the groove a little bit.

Q. You are heading into East Lake as the second youngest person in the field and only three years older than the youngest FedExCup winner ever. Going back to maybe your 2018 U.S. Amateur win, did you imagine your career taking off as quickly as it did? Where are you now compared to where you thought you would be at this age?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I could only dream about winning these tournaments back in 2018. That was basically -- I think I'd won one college event before winning the U.S. Amateur, and then winning the U.S. Amateur, that kind of changed a lot of things. I got to play in a couple majors as an amateur and still had to get my card and then sweet, I got my PGA TOUR card, and then a couple months later I won my first TOUR event and just kind of continuously -- I've checked off the boxes.

But it's not like I'm expecting to win X amount of tournaments or to win X amount of majors. It's just, okay,

this is as good as I am right now; what can I do to get better, and if I get better, I have the chance of winning these events. Whatever happens happens.

Yeah, it's been pretty cool to win two events this year at two golf courses that are very difficult, and I've had to rely on all of my skill sets, not just a couple things.

Q. Why do you think this has been the best year of your career?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: If you take everything into account, just -- I felt like in the '21 to '22 season I putted it better than I have this year, but I putted it okay. My short game has gotten a lot better, and I think I've driven it the best I've ever driven it in any other season.

Then my iron game has been, I would say, just okay for me compared to the other couple years I would say, but it's just putting all of that together, and then being clutch at the right times at Memorial and obviously this week and having a chance to contend in those major championships, I think I've taken a big step this year compared to other years.

Q. A lot of guys are gassed at this point in the season. I think anyone who follows you on Instagram knows that you play a lot of golf even during your off weeks. Where are you at physically, and how have you been able to kind of sustain this level of effort for this long?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, I'm about to pass out right now, but no, just a good night's sleep, and we're right back at it next week at East Lake. I'm sure it'll be hot and we'll be sweating a lot, so I'm definitely feeling that it's been a lot of golf, but it seems like the more I've played recently, I seem to play better.

Just need to lean into that and hopefully we have another good week next week.

Q. Have you ever shot a lower score even just casually, and do you know the circumstances? Also, how do you keep a good round going? Sometimes there's a little bit of fear like as you're going lower and lower to protect maybe. You hear other players say that. What's sort of the key to keep pushing?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I don't think I've ever shot a lower score than 61. I've shot 61 a couple times. Never 59 or even a 60, I think, in even a practice round.

I guess we've still got some more work to do.

But no, I don't know. When I get into the rhythm of -- normally I hit a lot of fairways. I'm a good driver of the ball,



so I'm going to have a lot of opportunities from the fairway, and whenever I kind of feel the shot with my irons and can just kind of -- I can aim left of the pin and swing as committed as I want to, and I know it's going to cut and I can almost feel how much it's going to cut towards the pin. It's one of those feelings I just feel like I'm -- if you put me in the fairway, I'm going to hit it somewhere close to the pin.

When I do that and I get the putter rolling, I'm trusting my reads, I've got the speed dialed in, and it's just one of those days that just everything seemed to flow and seemed to happen.

I guess I just didn't try to fight it. I just relied on my instincts and my intuition and worked out this time.

Q. I just want to ask you back on 15, your shot to the green from that tough lie, how tough a shot was that? It's tough for us to tell really.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it wasn't easy. I was a little upset that I didn't -- I got a little cute with the second shot. I should have just slammed a low 3-iron and just made sure that okay, even if I missed it left or right, I was going to be in the bunker, and the bunker shot would have been a lot easier. But it seemed to have -- I took a little bit off of it and it got a soft bounce and ended up in the downslope in the rough there.

It was almost -- it was kind of tricky because I had to tilt my shoulders to match the surface, and I didn't have too much green to work with, and at the same time the ball was sitting up a little bit, so it's one of those if you try to get all the way down and try to dig it out of the grass, it's easily -- you could easily go underneath it. So I kind of had to match that with okay, I need to clip the ball well, but I also need enough loft for it to stop quickly on the green.

It came off a little bit lower than I would have liked, but it came off perfectly and almost went in but rolled to maybe eight, nine feet past the hole, and that was a nice putt to make.

Q. What's your favorite shot of the day if it's not that one? Do you have another favorite shot of the day?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's a good question. I mean, the most satisfying shot was -- I hit a nice 4-iron into 8 today and gave myself a nice 15-footer down the slope. But I made a par there. It wasn't like that memorable, but it was maybe one of the more satisfying shots.

But one of the memorable shots on the back nine, I pulled my tee shot left on 14, and I had a pretty tricky lie in there

in the rough, and I said, 9-iron is not going to get there. I'm going to have to hit an 8-iron and it's going to come out low and hopefully it releases out the perfect amount.

As soon as I hit it, I just said go, go, go, go. I don't know where it landed, but I saw it trickling up there, and then it goes to a foot. It was just one of those days, and that was maybe the perfect shot that encapsulated the whole round.

Q. Sheer curiosity, what is it like sitting in the locker room watching two guys have to hole out on a full swing on the 18th hole for you to win? Is that weird at all?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that felt a lot better than them having to make a birdie to make it to a playoff. But yeah, it was pretty relaxed and just kind of -- I was just happy about my round and that I was able to -- if I would have missed the putt on 18, then I'm sitting in a completely different spot.

After I made the putt on 18, I was like, okay, whatever happens happens. I've kind of done all that I could do. So we'll just see how this plays out.

Q. Going into next week, and this is I think your fourth go into the TOUR Championship, did you ever feel like you had much of a chance when you were starting eight or ten shots behind, and do you think it will feel any differently when you get there this time?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's so important to be not too many shots behind the lead going into next week.

I think for -- I can't quite remember, but two out of the three times that I've played, I've been pretty far back. I've had nice weeks there, but just hasn't been good enough to really chase the leaders.

I think I have one fifth place finish there a couple years ago, which I had a really nice season and played well at East Lake and had a nice finish there, but this time it's going to be a little bit different. Now I'm chasing down the leader, and I've got a whole lot of the guys behind me, as well.

It'll be a little different setting, but still just got to play golf.

Q. I believe you're playing strategic and savvy, smart golf. You won the Memorial, now you win here. Is that coming more naturally to you now, and do you feel like there's sort of no limit to where you might be able to take this thing now that that's sort of your game, a smarter, savvier game?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I think it's one of the easiest things if you can think better and make better decisions, you can improve your score without necessarily getting better skill set-wise or physically, and I think that's one of the things that I've done really well this year.

Even just last week was a great reminder. I think I was 2-over the first day, and I had a bad start the second day, and I think I was second to last. Like a buddy of mine -- I had a nice round at the end of the day, but he just sent me this screenshot that I was almost dead last in the field.

I still felt like I was in contention on Sunday, an outside chance.

I think that was just a great reminder that okay, I don't have to play perfect golf to be up there, and I put that mindset into this week, and I felt like I played solid and nice golf the whole week, but I shot 1-under on Thursday, 2-under on Friday, and you wouldn't really think oh, man, I'm seven shots behind Max that was at 10-under.

That's something that Joe and I have talked to each other a lot about is that just because you're seven shots -- with the weekend to go, doesn't mean you're out of it.

Just got to make good decisions, always just plug along, and if you're right there, you might just snatch it and win.

I feel like that last week was a great learning experience, and obviously proved that this week.

Q. There was a sweet moment yesterday after your round that you met someone that probably changed your life. Can you comment on that meeting and how meaningful that was to you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, after making a hole-in-one last year, Evans Scholars, they I guess awarded Deanna free education at University of Illinois, and she's going to study agriculture and was it environmental engineering. That's not something I could do if I went to school for that.

That's super impressive. Obviously I work hard and I show up out here because I want to play good golf, but to see the things that actually -- just because I made a hole-in-one, that allowed her to pursue a pretty cool degree in something that's hopefully going to change her life and set her up for the rest of her life, and I think that's pretty cool to just be a part of that and have something to do with that. That was very special.

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