

# BMW Championship

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Castle Rock, Colorado, USA

Castle Pines Golf Club

## Viktor Hovland

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome our defending FedExCup champion Viktor Hovland into the interview room here at the 2024 BMW Championship. Great season last year. You're coming in here off a T2 finish at Memphis, something that you needed to do to get here. How proud are you of that effort, and what are you looking forward to this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that was really cool, especially after being 2-over par after 15 holes last week. It didn't look very good. I was almost mentally preparing to kind of be done at Memphis and just practice, getting some good work with Joe and keep practicing working on some things. Then being able to turn it around like that and not even just secure myself into this week but also to East Lake, as well, and now we're in a pretty nice spot, if I have a good week this week, to really have a chance next week.

Just super pumped and pumped about seeing my game improving and going in the right direction, so just super happy to be here.

**Q. Looking forward to this week, you've managed to see the golf course today in the pro-am. I don't know if you played all 18, but what are your first impressions and the adjustments you have to make?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I played the back nine yesterday and then the front nine today in the pro-am. It's a really good golf course. I think it's really fun, especially the back nine I really liked. I always think it's difficult to design a championship golf course when you're playing in this kind of altitude. But I think they've certainly done a great job here.

I think it's a perfect mix of some birdie holes, decent amount of water out there, and some of the par-5s are pretty cool. Yeah, I love the golf course.

**Q. Xander and Scottie have both had special seasons but they're a little bit different. If you could just snap your fingers and magically have one of those two seasons, which would it be and why?**



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VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think I answered this last week. I think in 20 years' time, I would probably rather have two majors, what Xander had, and obviously Scottie winning THE PLAYERS and the Masters is pretty good, too. With some of the other wins, as well, he's definitely had the better season.

But I think in like 20 years back -- 20 years in the future, looking back at the year, I think I'd rather have won two majors, just personally.

**Q. Billy Horschel was in here talking about the FedExCup Playoffs and emphasizing the Playoffs part of it and how in other sports you don't really -- a lot of surprising stuff happens at the end. It's not a season-long thing. It's more Playoffs. Do you feel like the way you're playing right now is sort of emphasizing that, that anything can happen at the end?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, are else I shouldn't have any business being here this week. Yeah, I think that's pretty cool. Kind of squeaked by in Memphis, and showing up that week and just knowing that, okay, if I have a couple good weeks, we can still win this thing, that gives you a little bit more motivation than just kind of showing up and if this was all over and there wasn't that much I could do to improve my position, that would be a little different.

I think that's a little exciting. I think that gives everyone a reason to tune in and see what's going on and seeing guys that are just barely getting into the Playoffs, and now you suddenly have a chance to win the whole thing.

I think that's an exciting thing about the Playoffs.

**Q. With you being defending FedExCup champ, there's a lot of talk about the format recently. Do you feel it is a good way to determine the best player for the season?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Definitely not, just because there's a few tournaments and you're playing for so many points. Scottie has definitely earned to be Player of the Year because I don't think anyone has kind of sniffed his results this year. But it is a playoff for a reason, and I think the Playoffs have been through a lot of different iterations, and



I don't really know what works best. I think we've got a pretty decent format. I think it works. Is it perfect? I wouldn't say so. But I don't really know a better way you can do it, although I haven't given it too much thought, to be honest with you.

**Q. You just sort of alluded to it, that on last Thursday you maybe weren't in the best place but you turned it around. We asked you about this going in, kind of about your year, and you've gone through this many times, but I just wonder about your resiliency. You've had some down moments this year and you've been pretty open about it. Where did you find it, and how did you sort of keep yourself from not just saying, okay, I'm going to get out of here and get back to work type of thing, and here you are?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah. Yeah, it's pretty miserable. When you're obviously playing bad golf, everyone plays bad golf occasionally, but I feel like I've always been very good at understanding why it's happened, and even if I understand why it happens, it's like, okay, how do I fix it, and that's been like a very difficult thing for me kind of throughout this year. It's like, okay, how do I stop doing what I'm currently doing that's making me not hit the shots that I want to hit.

That can feel a little bit -- you feel a little bit helpless at times when you know what's wrong but whatever you do, it doesn't seem to go in the right direction.

But I think at the end of the day, I've kind of comforted myself in the way that, like, I'm not broken. It's not my mind that's gone bad and I have to, like, oh, what if I can never play golf again. It's like, no, my machine is a little bit off. We just need to tweak the machine a little bit and then we're back to playing good golf again.

Whereas I feel like this game is just so stressful, especially when you're playing in front of this many people, obviously everyone is paying attention, and when you struggle, it's out there in front of everyone, and I think it's very easy to let that go into your head and you think it's something wrong with you instead of, like, I've always -- not blamed, but I always know that, okay, the reason why I'm hitting this certain shot, there's a mathematical reason why that is happening. So if I just figure out why and I go on the range and fix it, I'm going to hit good shots again.

So I can kind of separate the mental side from the physical side in a way.

**Q. When you're in one of those stretches and it's not going the way you want, can you just manage your game around that way and sort of live with it, or are**

**you trying to fix it during the round, and does that lead to more problems?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: So that's what I would say has been one of the -- one of my strengths just from probably college to where I've been currently is that there's been so many times where I'm like, it doesn't feel very good. I know exactly why, but it's not something that I can just change overnight.

But I can at least kind of inch my way closer a little bit day by day, and on the golf course maybe I'll find a feel that's not exactly where I want to be, but it's kind of in the middle. It's not where I currently am, but it's kind of in the middle, so over time when I keep having that feeling, it's going to get better and better and better every single day.

I've played a lot of really good golf with a golf swing that I haven't felt super comfortable with, and I think when you're in a spot like that, you truly learn how to play the game of golf because then you have to think more, you have to understand where your misses are going. So I think that's been very helpful for me.

It's just this year I got to a point where what I was doing was non-functional. I couldn't predict where the ball was going at all. That's where you have to really do some -- you have to make some changes.

**Q. You were in it until the very end at the PGA Championship and ended up finishing third. You were in it until the very end at Memphis last week and finished T2. It feels like those two things, although they could be looked at as similar, it feels like you're in a very, very different place than you were back in May. Can you speak to that, and how does it feel?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it might be too early to tell, but it definitely feels that way because I think I've gotten some concrete answers. I know where I'm at, and I know where I need to go. Then every day it's just a matter of kind of building on that and seeing progress, whereas in May, I got like an immediate -- I saw an immediate improvement, but then it didn't really stick. It just kind of stagnated after that, whereas now I felt like I've found something more -- a little bit more concrete, more tangible.

So I do believe that last week wasn't a fluke. Now, it might not play like that every week, but I do feel like my game now in the coming weeks are going to have a higher -- it's just going to have a higher consistency. I'm going to play better day in and day out than I did before.

**Q. You're talking about how it feels when it hasn't gone right, when it doesn't feel good. When you are**

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**playing really well, think back to this time last year, what does that feel like for you? Some guys say they almost black out when they're playing really well. For you, what does when you're playing really well feel like?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously I'm sure we all have heard, just don't think. You just step up there and you just react, which is obviously the best mindset to be in. But if you have a technique that's off or you're doing something that's not very good, as soon as you don't think, that's your motor pattern, and if your motor pattern sucks, that's just not going to help.

I have to -- I think we have to just do all the work on the practice range, in the practice rounds, and then when you kind of see that the ball is matching with the image that you have in your head and you've seen that enough over time, then you just step up to the golf course and you're like, okay, there's water left, but I know that every time I'm starting that ball left and it cuts away from the water, so what's the point of being nervous. You essentially know what's going to happen.

I think when you've seen the result in practice and you start seeing it in tournaments, it's easier to go, okay, yeah, let's just step up and hit my normal shot, and then, yeah, it usually turns out pretty well.

**Q. A lot of people are talking about the altitude this week. I'm wondering in your work with Dodo if he's said anything about altitude?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, we haven't chatted too much about that this week, just a couple strategy points off the tee and stuff, and then Shay and I, we've just been on the range trying to do some work with seeing how far the ball is going and brought a TrackMan out on the golf course and kind of checked every single shot in the pro-am and in the practice round yesterday to see if it matches up from what we saw on the range.

**Q. Is there a level of patience you have to have? Is there some patience involved in feeling like you might hit a perfect shot but because of the conditions --**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I'm kind of a rookie when it comes to playing in altitude like this, so I'm kind of just trying to learn as much as possible. I guess it is easier to let yourself go, like, man, I'm hitting a 50-degree, and my 50-degree out here goes 155 yards, and when you're hitting a 50-degree if you miss your target distance-wise by like six, seven yards, you're like, man, that's bad. You should have better distance control. But then you've got to remember you're hitting it from 155, and at sea level if I'm hitting a 9-iron and

I'm five, six, seven yards off that's actually a decent shot.

I think you've got to be a little bit kind to yourself, and when your distance control is maybe a little bit off because there's a lot of variance when it comes to the altitude, the wind. You don't know how much it's going to be affected, and then the spin rate on the ball, stuff like that. There's a lot of calculations that go into it.

**Q. You were in danger of being the first BMW champ not to be able to defend your title.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Nice.

**Q. I'm curious why did you not consider -- did consider at all adding 3M or Wyndham to help your chances?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I didn't really feel like it. If I didn't feel like my game was in a good enough spot to where I could even garner more FedExCup points, I didn't want to just go there and try to make the cut and then go home. I felt like my time was better spent taking Wyndham off, for example, being with Joe in Nashville, and I felt like we really got some good work in.

If it wasn't for that week, I would not have finished second last week. So that's why I really value those practice weeks where we're actually getting good work in, and I can see results in my practice. That's going to give me confidence to play well when I enter a tournament. Instead of just like playing nine weeks in a row when your game feels terrible. That doesn't accomplish anything. I'd rather play well when I'm first there.

**Q. A lot is being made of the altitude adjustment on length. With your work with Joe and I know Joe can get pretty deep into the short game numbers, are you guys making any adjustments when it comes to pitching or anything closer to the green when it comes to spin control or something like that versus the entire length narrative that we keep hearing about?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, the short game stuff this week is obviously completely different turf that we're playing on this week compared to Memphis last week. We get some really grainy Bermuda, super sticky. Last week it was a lot of moving forward, hitting ball first. It was kind of difficult to open the face a lot and kind of try to launch the ball up in the air because you're worried about kind of hitting the ground first, and if you do that on Bermudagrass, you're dead, which I'm sure you saw plenty of guys doing last week, just kind of chip it five feet.

This week you have some pure lies. They're very tight.

Here you can definitely kind of slap the club into the ground a little bit and pop the ball straight up. That's just kind of the grass this week. That's kind of what I'm working on in short game.

**Q. But there's no difference based upon the altitude and the thinness of the air?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: There might be, but not that I'm really aware of. I don't think that I need to get that deep with it. Now you're in my head.

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