

TOUR Championship

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Atlanta, Georgia, USA

East Lake Golf Club

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome reigning FedExCup champion Viktor Hovland to the interview room here at the 2024 TOUR Championship. You're coming in here at No. 17 off of some solid weeks in Memphis and Denver. Can you give us some comments on the state of your game heading into East Lake this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I feel like things are getting better every single week, so that's nice to build on. Obviously I had a really nice week in Memphis and played okay last week. I just couldn't get anything going with my putter.

I'd rather play bad if I putted poorly instead of hitting it all over Denver. I'm taking some good things into this week. Obviously a completely different golf course, so kind of have to spend some time getting used to the new golf course, but still just kind of working on the same processes, and hopefully it clicks a little bit better this week.

Q. You're making your fifth consecutive start here at East Lake and the newly restored golf course is top of mind. Can we get some comments on that and what it's like? I heard you played the front yesterday.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I only played the front yesterday, and just as soon as I walked on the property, I was kind of shocked. It looks nothing like it used to. Seems like he's basically changed every single hole out there. It was just kind of wild how much you can actually change the holes with not really moving holes around. It's all kind of in the same place, but yet none of the holes look exactly the same.

I could probably try to describe a person that's never been here before what it used to look like, and it's almost like you can't imagine it.

It'll be interesting to kind of get used to it, that's for sure.

Q. What was the biggest change out here that got your attention? What hole?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, No. 1 was like -- I started off of 1, so when I saw 1, I'm like, wow, this is completely different. It's way longer.

I think the green areas -- as soon as I saw the green areas, that was like, okay, wow, this is going to be a completely different golf course because now you have huge undulating greens with big runoffs, and instead of having tight Bermuda around the greens, you have really, really tight zoysia. It's just going to play completely different.

I felt like the rest of the course was kind of indicative of what I saw on No. 1.

Q. What did you think of 9?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think it looks fine, but I also thought what it used to be was fine, as well. I think maybe it was getting a little bit too severe towards the back portion of the old green, but now with the greens being so firm and if you put the tees all the way in the back, those left hole locations, I'm not sure you can even stop it there.

I think you might have to put the tee forward on that hole. But yeah, I thought it was okay. It wasn't my favorite hole.

Q. From a strategy standpoint, are the changes more off the tee and having to change your lines or around the greens? You talked about some of the chipping areas.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, both. One of the things -- I wouldn't say East Lake ever had a lot of strategy off the tee before. It was always kind of tree-lined fairways, narrow fairways, and you had an occasional bunker here and there. But usually it's just kind of -- you either hit driver or 3-wood, and you have to hit it straight.

I really do appreciate that kind of golf because I think trees really add a lot to the strategy of the golf course.

But at least here when he's taken away so many trees, you really have to emphasize the strategy portion of it or else it just becomes a bombing-fest where everyone hits driver.

And I do think Andrew has done a great job with positioning certain bunkers in there. You really have to



think, okay, well, if I want to cover this bunker, I have to worry about the next bunker and what kind of angle I'm getting in there and all that stuff. I think he's done a pretty good job with that.

Q. Do you like the changes? And how do you take it as this is the course to decide the FedExCup? Does that help it, hurt it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think if I would have shown -- now, speaking in mind I haven't been to the back nine yet, I've only seen the front nine, but if the front nine is kind of indicative to the back, then I would say if I showed up here and I'd never seen the golf course before, then I would say, yeah, looks pretty good. It's a pretty good golf course. Looks pretty hard, as well.

But just from being here four or five times before and just remembering what it used to be, I just think it was a way more kind of simplistic golf course before, but it was still -- it was simple but it was very, very good. I'm still a little bit biased towards what it used to be.

But I understand the whole look of the golf course, as soon as I stepped foot here and saw the green areas and stuff, I thought, okay, this is a major championship golf course. That seems like what he's tried to do with the place.

In my heart, it's like, East Lake was never -- it never had that look, and it's such a historic place. It's like, should we really try to make East Lake look like a major championship golf course. That's kind of the only place I'm at. But I don't think he's done a bad job. It's just the style of it.

Q. Last week you were the defending champion at a totally different course in a different state. This time you're at the same course. But do you feel like you're defending at a different course?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's almost the same scenario as last week it feels like. Yeah, just every single hole is different. It's going to take a slightly different game to play well this week compared to what it used to be last year.

Q. Do you have a sense of what a winning score could be?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I'd have to see the back first, but I think it's definitely going to be harder. It depends also where you put some of those pins at because I was looking at a couple of potential pin locations, and for example, on 2 when you tuck the pin to the right there just over the bunkers -- because the greens are so firm, no one is going to go for the pin.

But in the middle of the green you have a slope that's right to left. So where you want to hit it, you're hitting good shots middle of the green, but then the ball slopes away from the pin.

I don't know where the certain pin locations are going to be, but you could make this place very difficult.

Q. How would you compare your game this week versus how you felt coming in here last year?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, if last year was a 9 out of 10, I'd probably say we're still at a 5, 5 out of 10, 4, 5 out of 10 right now. I know I can still shoot good numbers, but it just feels like it's a little bit more hard work. It's tougher for me to kind of string the good rounds together day by day.

Last year I played well. I knew I played well. Every single day was a good day. Whereas now it just feels like a little bit more hard work. But at least I'm on the right track.

Q. (No microphone.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, it's as bad as I've played in a long time, so we can call it a 1, hopefully.

Q. On No. 1 today, what did you hit into the green, having hit a driver off the tee? Was it different from last year? If so, what was the club, and what similarities or differences did you see on the holes that you played?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: So last year -- yesterday when I played, I didn't really warm up. I just went straight to the first tee. But I hit a really nice drive and it was slightly into the wind, and I tried to hit a 6-iron going into the green and I still left it short of the hole.

For me, probably the right club would have been a good drive and a good 5-iron into a slight breeze yesterday. Whereas last year we were hitting driver, wedge on that hole. That's a pretty big difference, especially into a green that's uphill. It's blind. It's a huge green. You don't necessarily know all the slopes and where to land it.

As for similarities, I don't --

Q. Other than No. 1, are there different distances you were hitting your approach shots on other holes on the front side?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I would say they're fairly similar. Like the par-5, 6th was a little bit different because it's a dogleg right now, so it was a driver, 4-iron in there, but I've hit

driver, 4-iron in there in the past, as well. Not too crazy different on the remaining holes.

Q. We know this year was kind of a roller coaster for you, but how do you evaluate your performance throughout the year, tournament results? Do you even look at that, or are you basing everything off of feel and how your swing is feeling?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I wouldn't say I've been very happy with this year, but I do think I've learned a lot. What's really cool is that I've still made it to this week playing what I felt like is absolute garbage. I think that's something that's pretty cool to kind of have in my back pocket is that okay, we can struggle and we can still come out here and have a chance to win tournaments.

I think that's really cool. That's kind of how I'm processing this. Yeah, I'll sit down by the end of the year and really look at the whole course of the year. But I feel like I do a pretty good job of that, of analyzing each week as they go, so I know where I'm at.

It's not like I have to play three months in a row and go, what did I do the last three months. I'm always kind of present and analyzing what's going on.

I'm just happy we're moving in the right direction.

Q. In the off-season what will you do with your time mostly?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know. We'll see. I'd definitely like to practice a little bit more and kind of really integrate some of these changes or the path that I'm moving on. I really want to make sure that we're solidifying that path and it's headed to a good direction so that for 2025 I'm ready to go and just get after it.

Q. Along those lines, what part of you was pleased or disappointed coming out of Memphis, realizing that you were well outside and you were pretty locked into here? I can't imagine this was written in ink, being here this year.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, it wasn't. Obviously what Hideki did, birdie-birdie finish, I would have liked to have finished a little bit better, but I couldn't be very disappointed. After being 2-over par after 15 holes on Thursday and then having a chance to win the golf tournament with a couple holes left, that obviously -- instead of just trying to make it into Denver, I was already locked up here.

I mean, I was super pumped just to come back and turn a pretty bad year into an okay year, making it here.

I'm just kind of pumped that the curve is trending upwards, and I've just got to ride that wave and keep it going.

Q. Next year is going to be our fourth year in a row of doing Memphis, rotating BMW and then East Lake. Are you okay with that, or would you like to see a little more variety in the post season?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think it's pretty cool kind of going back to the same places. I think TPC Southwind is a great golf course. I've always been a fan of East Lake, so kind of having two similar -- or the same stops out of the three -- I think BMW is a cool one to rotate around, and we've been to some amazing places the few years that I've played that event.

I think it works, but if the fans want to see somewhere else, maybe that should be something to look at, but I also think it works. We go to Augusta every year, and I don't think people complain about that.

Yeah, I think it works.

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