

WGC Dell Technologies

Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



LAURA VESCOVI: We would like to welcome Viktor Hovland to the virtual interview room here at the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play. This is your first time here at Austin Country Club. Can you talk about your excitement to debut at this event and the unique format that we have here.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's been awhile since I last played match play and I had some very fond memories of playing match play, so just kind of looking forward to getting back into that mindset. I've only played the front nine of the golf course here, but it's pretty quirky with the rolling terrain and it's a great match play course. I feel like you can really get it going and you can take a couple of risks where you probably wouldn't have taken them in stroke play, so I think it will be interesting tournament this week.

LAURA VESCOVI: You've had a great season already, a win at Mayakoba Golf Classic, you came in second at the WGC workday event just a few weeks ago and you're ranked No. 4 in the FedExCup standings. What do you need to do to continue that momentum as you look ahead to the summer and the FedExCup playoffs coming up in August?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, just kind of continue to work on every single part of my game. I feel like, as boring as it sounds, I feel like I've gotten a little bit better everywhere, which has been really nice. Short game's coming along, putting it more consistently, I would say maybe the irons have to get a little bit better at. My shorter irons need to be dialed in here this week, because if you hit it good off the tee here you're going to have a lot of wedges to 8-irons into these holes. So if you can constantly put pressure on your opponent by hitting it inside 10, 15 feet or 20 feet, whatever, you're going to be doing pretty good.

LAURA VESCOVI: Great. We'll open it up to questions.

Q. You mentioned it's been a long time since you

played match play, but you're a U.S. Amateur champion, so you know the format, you're good at the format. What mental changes do you have to make this week or what adjustments do you have to make to get back in that match play zone?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think it just kind of forces you to reset a little bit more. It's an interesting dynamic and because in stroke play tournament you try to kind of relieve yourself of pressure on every single shot, you're just kind of thinking it's a 72-hole stroke event. Whereas now you know every single kind of -- even though every single shot and hole matters in the stroke play, now you only have 18 holes and it puts more emphasis on every single hole you play, because you don't get that many holes.

But at the same time if you do make a double or a triple, that would make me feel pretty bad about my game in a stroke play event, but in a match play event you kind, it kind of forces you to kind of reset a little bit, okay, we just lost this one hole and we're still in it. So I just like the kind of the short memory span you have kind of in match play and how you can take advantage of the momentum that you get through certain stretches.

Q. Is there any part of you that holds the thought that I can really kind of show how good I am in this format with considerations of the Ryder Cup down the road and the decisions Pdraig Harrington will have to make?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, a little bit, for sure. I mean it's not, it's only a couple of matches in the grand scheme of things, so I'm not sure how much you could, you can say, but if you go out and win every single match by a considerable margin, I mean that surely speaks some volumes. So I, yeah, I would say it's definitely a good prep, hopefully at least.

Q. I know you said you didn't play a lot of match play growing up, I would be curious with the way the calendar has kind of worked with COVID, do you feel like a first timer? I know you're technically playing the first one of these, but do you feel like it or do you feel like you've accomplished yourself, you've won on TOUR.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's a good question. I mean, it



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does, I do feel like I'm a newcomer still, because this is only my, I haven't played that many WGC's out here and it's the first time teeing it up here in Austin, so there's still a lot of things that are new. But I don't see that as a knock on myself, just because I'm new, you know, I played some good events in the past here and not too long ago, so I'm going into the event thinking I can do pretty well, even though I am a first timer here.

Q. Would you change your, the way maybe you play in a stroke play event versus to how you'll play this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Maybe a little bit. It's hard to say. I can't really think of any examples just now, I've only seen the front nine. The front nine's pretty straightforward, even though there's a lot of, obviously there's a lot of quirks to the course, but there aren't really a whole lot of different decisionmaking you can make on the front nine just because it's a match play or stroke play. I would have to see on the back nine. But one example is just like if you're 4-down with 6 to play you don't really have a choice but to maybe squeeze an iron shot a little bit closer than you would have if it was a stroke play event. So it just kind of changes the dynamic a little bit, depending upon what, if you're up or down or, yeah, what the match is.

Q. The U.S. Amateur and the way you won that with I think record for fewest holes needed to win the U.S. Amateur. Did that change at all how you viewed yourself or what you were capable of? What did that week mean to your career?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That was a big one, yeah. Because I had some good results before that and I knew I was capable of playing some high-level golf. I think my first college win in Florida, it's coming up on three years ago, I think, that was a big one for me, because that was like the first tournament that I played really well from start to finish. And I had had some really good rounds here and there, but then I would have a bad start or a bad finish and I wouldn't, like I wouldn't win the event or I didn't play as well as I could. And the U.S. Amateur was kind of another, like basically my second week of doing that just playing really well throughout the whole week and it was convenient that it came at the U.S. Amateur. And, yeah, that gave me a lot of confidence going forward, especially when I was turning pro later or the next year and, yeah, no, that was a big one for me.

Q. Can you quantify how much better the short game is. We saw obviously great shots at Mayakoba down the stretch and are you surprised at all how quickly you improved. It's, obviously just last year you said you suck at chipping, and it seems like it's changed

drastically. Is it surprising how easily it's come, I guess?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, you shouldn't take it, I'm not taking anything for granted when it comes to golf, it's pretty humbling, and as soon as you think you got it -- and I could, I hear it's kind of overseed and it's hard to mess it up too much and then the next week I might think I'm really good at chipping and I hit like an into-the-grain shot and then that's when you kind of start second guessing yourself a little bit. But I do see a lot of improvements, which I'm really happy about, but it's still got some work to do, it's not perfect. But it doesn't have to be either, I just have to rely on something that can get the job done. It's a work in progress still, but I'm happy to see that I've made progress.

Q. Of the top players in the world you probably have the least amount of experience at Augusta, other than 2019. Have you taken a scouting visit this year or done anything to kind of aid in your prep?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I really haven't. It's just been playing so much golf the last few weeks and months that, yeah, in my off weeks I've really just wanted to just relax and, yeah, take it easy. But I'll probably head down there a little bit earlier than normally I would have, just to check it out. And obviously I just feel like the things that I've been working on in my game every day that should help me show up more prepared, regardless if I've been there practicing every day or not.

So I don't see that as a, making it harder to perform there, not showing up earlier.

Q. Is there anyone's mind you want to pick of any veterans of how they played the golf course over the years?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't thought about that. The thing is I feel like the course has changed a lot, so, depending upon who you speak to, I'm not sure if -- this might sound bad -- but if their advice is still accurate. But, you know, I learn kind of best from doing it by myself. If someone just tells me what to do that kind of doesn't really resonate too much with me, I have to see it, I have to do it and then I'll learn from it.

So that's probably going to be my thought process going into that week, but if I play a practice round with a couple of guys I'll ask them a few questions or see what they think on a certain thing.

Q. Is your mom going to watch this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: What's that?



VIKTOR HOVLAND: Thank you.

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Q. Is your mom going to watch this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I told her she's not allowed to watch anymore (laughing).

Q. You were talking earlier about sort of the different nuances of match play. I just wonder how they play with your natural instincts when you're sort of drawn into perhaps being more aggressive than you would otherwise like to be or is it actually you having the opportunity to really fully express yourself?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's, I think the format too, when it's heads-up, it's just guy versus guy, you're not playing against the golf course. So when I, in a stroke play event I might set myself to a little too high of a standard because there is a, you know, you always have a perfect way of playing the golf course in your mind and that doesn't usually work out all the time. Whereas, in match play you only have to beat the guy that's in front of you and it's easier to, if you make a birdie on top of his birdie or and then you make another putt, the next putt to get a hole back, it's just so much easier to get momentum instead of just playing a stroke-play event and making a couple of nice putts for par and birdie, because like you're essentially playing the course and playing within yourself. So I think I've just been, I don't know if there's a word that's used to describe that, but I guess like I can get a lot of motivation and kind of momentum just from, yeah, playing against someone heads up.

Q. Not too hard, can you give me a rundown on Shay and your relationship with him and how that's helped you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's been great. We have been with each other now for two years pretty much, almost two years. So it's, yeah, he's a great caddie, he works really hard and is very professional, which obviously I like. But at the same time he's an Aussie and can have some fun and he's very easy to talk to, makes me feel comfortable out there on the course. And I think that it's just a perfect blend between professionalism, but at the same time keeping things low key and having a good chat out there on the golf course.

Q. So he knows how to bring out that trademark smile of yours is what you're saying.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, yeah. For sure.

LAURA VESCOVI: All right. Thank you, Viktor, and best of luck this week.

