

# WGC Dell Technologies Match Play

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Austin, Texas, USA

Austin Country Club

## Viktor Hovland

### Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'd like to welcome Viktor Hovland into the interview room at the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play. Making your second start here, 1-2 last year in group play. How do you feel coming into this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I feel pretty good. Been a lot of golf lately, so I'm definitely a little bit tired. The day yesterday kind of did me well, just kind of relaxing. But Match Play is a fun event and lots of things can happen, but my game feels pretty good, so hopefully I can roll in some putts.

THE MODERATOR: You're in group 3 this week with Will Zalatoris, Cameron Tringale, and Sepp Straka. Any reactions when you saw the group yesterday.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's hard to say. Obviously three great players and they've been playing some good golf. If you can play anyone -- it's 18 holes, and this course there's a lot of risk and reward. On paper it doesn't really matter who you're playing against, you've got to play your best and still you might get beat.

Yeah, I'm looking forward to get going and see how the matches go.

**Q. Obviously match play this week, there's a team event at Zurich; I'm just curious if you had any ideas on maybe another format that you'd like to see played on the TOUR and if there's any room for it?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's a good question. I really haven't put too much thought into it. I think these events are fun, but as a player, you want to try to test your game in a stroke-play event 72 holes. It's just kind of the purest form.

I like playing in those, but for -- obviously it's nice to mix it up and play match play and do some team events, but I don't know if we should incorporate more of them or a



completely different format. I don't really know, and I don't know where to fit that into the schedule, but I think those ideas are cool, as well.

**Q. What do you play back home with your buddies? Do you just play normal match play? Do you play Wolf?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: We play some Wolf when I'm back in Oklahoma playing against the guys or something. But I'm not a big fan of the game because I remember in school, shoot maybe 1- or 2-under, shoot bogey free, but you're only making one or two birdies versus the guy that hits one or two in the crap and you're out of the hole, but then you make three birdies and you're sitting there with all the money. It was a little unfair that way.

No, we would play two-team best-ball or best and worst or mix it up a little bit. Yeah, we were able to find some different games.

**Q. As an Oklahoma State golfer, I don't know if you're allowed to say anything good about a Texas golfer, but why do you think Scottie finally broke through this year? And once you win a tournament, does that just change everything about how you approach your game in every tournament?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, Scottie has been a great player on essentially all the different levels. I mean, he was a great junior golfer. Maybe didn't play as good as he wanted in college, but he had a great amateur career, and obviously on the Korn Ferry TOUR, he won there.

Out here he's been really close for quite a while, but sometimes it's a little bit of luck, as well, winning a tournament. You can play really well and put yourself in contention, but things have to go your way, as well. I think we finally saw that when he puts himself in contention so many times you're going to win a couple. He's got a big-time game.

And the second part, I would say so, a little bit. It just gives you more belief that you can do it again. Especially I think it depends in which way you win it. If you feel like you



careered it and made every single putt out there to win by a shot, that's a little different. But if you feel like, hey, I left some shots out there and stayed in it and still won the tournament, that's a little different. I definitely feel like there's some things you can draw from your first win.

**Q. If somebody asked you to give them your one or two best pieces of advice for match play specifically, whether it's psychological, whether it's practical, whatever, what would you say?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: One thing is -- I've kind of -- I try to keep myself thinking this way, as well. Obviously expecting the other person to play well, and knowing that, thinking that, okay, if I go out and shoot -- it's quite a lot of wind, so I think the course will be playing a lot harder. But let's say this course when it's no wind, it tends to play a little bit easier. And then just have the mindset that okay, I'm probably going to have to shoot 5-, 6-under par to beat this guy and kind of just focus on playing your own score.

I feel like sometimes I've tried to maybe force things a little bit too much knowing the other guy is 40 feet away and feeling like I have to stick one in there close and then end up short-siding myself. Then he two-putts for a win and I make bogey instead of just playing my normal game and putting the pressure on the opponent instead of maybe giving it to him a couple times here and there. It's just to kind of stick to your own game and let things happen.

**Q. When you see your group draw come out, do you flag certain matches? I know the typical answer would be they're all just opponents, I have to play my best, but do any of them excite you more than any others?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, not really. I think they're all going to be fun. All the different matches, they kind of live their own life. You never know what you're going to get. You might play the best player in the field and suddenly he three-putts a couple holes or short-sides himself a couple times, which you weren't expecting. And then if you're playing the last-ranked player in the field and suddenly he drops a few bombs on you early, and you're like, wow, I'm three down here.

You just never know what you're going to get in match play. I feel like instead of maybe trying to get excited about who you're playing, instead try to give everyone the same amount of respect and expect that the other guy is not going to hand you over free holes.

**Q. This match between you and Will is obviously going to be like a flusher's dream. Do you ever find yourself maybe when you play with a guy who does one particular thing really well, like maybe paying**

**more attention to their game, just like wow, he hits the ball so good or he makes everything? And is there a particular player who maybe you've played with that that really is the case?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, to be frank, I don't like to look too much about the other player, especially not if we're playing in match play. I'll watch the shot, but I'm not looking at oh, his swing is like this, he kind of grips it like that, he does three or four waggles. I try to just kind of pay attention to the ball and then I stick to what I'm doing.

I mean, you certainly pay attention if the other guy is making a lot of putts, and then as soon as he has a six-footer to tie, you just know that he's going to make it versus maybe having a good chance to miss it.

A couple things here and there, and if the other guy is really striping it, you don't really -- as I say, you don't get your hopes up that he's going to make a mistake. It just puts more pressure on your game and know that you can't give the opponent anything for free.

Yeah, you certainly pay attention if the other guy is making putts or is flushing it.

**Q. Do you pay attention the other way, if you notice a guy struggling with something?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah. I mean, if you see a guy hook a couple tee shots and you get to a hole that has a hard right-to-left wind, maybe he's more likely to miss the left again there. But if you start thinking about that on every single hole and hoping that he's going to do that, I feel like that takes away the focus on me just doing well. So instead of hoping for the other guy to mess up, I try to just focus on making birdies to beat the other guy.

**Q. Are you pretty generous in giving putts?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I would say I'm fair. Not that maybe there's anything fair or not to it, I don't know. But if it's a tap-in, I'm going to give those putts. But if there's a chance the other person is going to miss it, then yeah, I'm going to have him putt it out. That's what we do normally in a stroke-play event. So yeah, if the other person takes that the wrong way, then so be it.

**Q. This doesn't apply to you currently, but can a player play their way back into stroke-play form during match play?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah. I mean, I would say so. It's another tournament. And I feel like -- especially myself, I feel like I've played some of my best golf in match play



because sometimes I have a tendency of maybe getting a little too protective or too cautious in a stroke-play event. Because you know that even though every shot counts in a match play event, you're only playing one guy, whereas in a stroke-play event you know that, okay, I can't really short-side myself here because I might make a double and then I might miss the cut. It kind of starts compounding that way.

I feel like sometimes I have a tendency of being a little timid. Instead of in match play, it's all about okay, you're trying to make birdies. You're not necessarily too focused on the mistakes you might make, it's about trying to pull off the good shots.

I feel like just shifting that focus might put your mind in a state where you're more likely to perform.

**Q. So it essentially can unleash the shackles, if you will, on a guy who might be struggling?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I could see that.

**Q. Already a short week with things starting on Wednesday prep-wise. Yesterday I'm assuming with the tornado and things going on here, you didn't get much time out there. Does that affect the way you prepare for something and how does that throw off your game maybe?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I still haven't been out on the course yet so I'm going to try to check some of it out and get going again. I can't really answer that question yet because I don't know how it affects me. But I mean, last week was a very quick week, kind of similar where we only got a couple days to prepare.

I would say generally it doesn't affect me too much, but given THE PLAYERS week was such a long week, I feel like I would have benefitted from more rest going into a tournament. But sometimes it's kind of nice to only get to play nine holes before a tournament or just show up, hit a couple balls, and then get after it because, not that you're lowering your expectations, but you kind of go with it in a little different fresher mindset. It's not like you've played the course three, four times before even teeing it up and then you're too tired or too exhausted before the tournament even starts.

I don't know, I think both can be good and both can be bad.

**Q. Interesting follow-up for you specifically, not growing up in Oklahoma but now living in Oklahoma, tornado watches aren't a huge deal here, of course. Kind of a big deal yesterday. How did you spend**

**yesterday, and did you ever think you'd be at a point in your life where tornado watch was something that was kind of a routine for you?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I've certainly had a couple of instances in Oklahoma where we had to take shelter and stuff. I didn't even think it was going to touch down yesterday and be so close. I had to pick up a friend of mine at the airport and I think one of the tornadoes was about five or seven miles away from there. We definitely got hit by some rain, and it was a little scary there.

Yeah, it's definitely nothing similar to Norway, that's for sure.

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