

# Hero Dubai Desert Classic

Wednesday, 15 January, 2025

Dubai, UAE

Majlis Course at Emirates Golf Club

## Viktor Hovland

### Press Conference



BRIONY CARLYON: We are delighted to be joined by Viktor Hovland here at the Hero Dubai Desert Classic.

Obviously a win in 2022, but the first time you've been back in Dubai and at this event. Give us your thoughts on being here.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's good to be back. Obviously some good memories here from three years ago. Yeah, love this place and excited to get started.

**Q. I know you had a bit of a foot injury, how is that and how do you feel?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It's healed a lot the last couple weeks but it did bother me a little bit the last couple days. I forgot to bring my shoes that was half a size bigger than I used in Hawai'i. That did help. These shoes were a little bit tight, but no issue. It should be fine.

**Q. At the start of the season, are you the type of player that sets targets and specific goals, and if so, what are they?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Not really a whole lot of results, oriented goals. It's mostly about just process and making sure that I'm controlling the things that I can control; that technique-wise, things are in order, and I'm doing the right things that increases the chances of me playing the best that I can. And then whatever happens, happens.

**Q. Increasing your chances of playing well, I've seen this firsthand but you, Sean and your manager and your new coach have been the last people to leave the range the last two nights. How is that going working with TJ, is it?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously been seeking out a lot of different coaches' opinions and been trying to kind of get to the bottom of what's going on and what the path forward is. It's been pretty frustrating, but I feel like TJ and I are making some good progress.

Obviously would have like to not finish the days pretty late on the range. I'd like to just have it figured out and go home and lay on the couch and just know that my ball is going to go pretty straight.

But yeah, it's been a little bit challenging times. So you know, when you're trying to get back to old patterns, you've got to work on it. It doesn't happen on its own. So you've got to put some extra work in.

**Q. Going back to your missing shoe, when did you realise you had not brought it with you?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, I actually did realise it. But it was a bit of a kerfuffle getting here. I missed my first flight. I was in a little bit of a rush and I just didn't even bring it. I just figured, it will be okay, and then I got here and put the shoes on and it hurt a little bit more, and then obviously wish I had brought the bigger shoe. But hey, always learning.

**Q. Are you taking painkillers for it?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I am, yeah.

**Q. To go back, the struggles you've been having, given that you made this game look so easy when you came out here, is that more frustrating for you that you know what you're capable?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, certainly makes me cherish how I used to play golf for the first, say, four years of my career. It's been very effortless. Just kind of standing over the ball and knowing that, okay, the ball is going to start somewhere there end and up over there somewhere. That's a pretty stress-free way of playing golf.

Obviously I've always tried to push myself, and even when it was really good, I kept on pushing it, and maybe setting too high expectations because maybe didn't realise how good it was or I thought it could continue to get better and better and better. For the most part of my career, every decision that I've made to change something up in order to play better, it has worked.

But you know, last year and some change, I've just gotten into some bad habits, and there's been a couple key moves that I used to make in my old golf swing that I'm currently not doing. And I've got to get back to making that movement in order to play my best golf. That's just kind of where we're at.

**Q. Looking back, do you feel you've made some decisions that maybe you regret?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, you could say that. I think a lot of people have it maybe misconstrued a little bit that I made a conscious decision to go down this rabbit hole.

I think it's just your golf swing is an ever-evolving organism, and every week you're out here playing, you have intentions and feels that would seem relatively innocuous. But you keep those intentions and feels in there, and then might morph into something else. I just didn't address it.

You know, just to put it simply, I added a lot of draw pieces in my golf swing because I'd always been a cutter, and I wanted to see the ball not cut as much. And then you add more draw pieces in there, and then suddenly, I get sick and tired of it missing left and now I'll want to cut it, and that compensation was not good for my swing. It's just a process of, you know, sh-t happens. Like I didn't go down there and say, no, this is better.

I made a poor decision. That's the game of golf for you. It's hard to play golf 20 years great.

**Q. You spoke about the insight you got from other instructors. Why did you go for TJ Yeaton, and what, in particular, have you seen from him that you think he can help you?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, kind of checked a lot of coaches off the list. I figured I'd give TJ a shot. He's very smart. He's been around the game for a long time. I was impressed by the conversations that we had, and figured, yeah, we'll see how it goes of.

**Q. Just a couple of questions. In 2022 at The Hero Challenge, you really seemed frustrated by the new regulations that came on the PGA TOUR, and you spoke about how you could not defend the championship over here because of the schedule conflicts. Are you now at peace with the way the schedule works for you?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I can't exactly remember what I said three years ago about that.

But yeah, I did at least question a little bit of that Strategic

Alliance, when you put bigger Signature Events around some of the bigger tournaments on the DP, you know, that does make it harder, and it's a shame that I haven't been back here in three years' time.

Obviously I could have come back here before but it's a lot of travel for me to go from Norway to Hawai'i and Hawai'i to Dubai and back to the States again. That's just a conscious decision that I made to play a little bit more in the States.

But yeah, I don't know. It is what it is. Just happy to be back here now.

**Q. And also, can I ask you about your houseguest in Stillwater? Very special to this region as you know, and started his Korn Ferry Tour event pretty well. Did you meet him? Did you see something in him? Because Rayhan seems to be in a really good space now playing well. Can you talk to us about that?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, he's a great guy. Obviously came to Oklahoma state highly recruited and had some struggles when he came to Oklahoma State. The game wasn't very easy for him at some point, but he's fought back hard and turned pro and had a great start to his professional career.

So yeah, the few times that I'm home and he's home, we had a great time, and it's fun to see him playing well. I think he can have a great year.

**Q. You once said that you loved chess, and your friend, Magnus Carlsen, is making a lot of news. You must have heard about how Magnus almost got kicked out of a World Championship because he wore jeans there. Any thoughts on that?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I saw the headlines but I haven't delved keep into the details. So I don't really have an opinion, but obviously from the headlines, it sounds interesting.

I mean, he's the G.O.A.T. of chess, so I guess he can do whatever he wants. I love it. Wear jeans (laughing).

**Q. You talk about your swing and trying to get feels, and you may have spoke about this in the past, but what is does a double pump give you?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It's a drill that I've always done ever since I've grown up indoors in Norway. We have a lot of time to work on our golf swings, and just something that stuck with me. If I want to make a conscious change, you have to kind of break down the golf swing or piece it

together so you can see an improvement in the movement that you're trying to make.

And for me right now, I had just gotten into a really bad habit in the backswing where my forearms will kind of twist the other way. My face gets really shut. Get really steep and across the line on the top of the backswing. For me, when I kind of separate the swing from backswing to downswing, I can kind of slowly put my arms and club in a better position for me to swing down.

It's not ideal because it's not quite as accurate as I would have liked, but at least it's the best I've got right now with the driver.

So around here, you've really got to hit it straight. If you're missing over half of the fairways, you're really going to struggle. At least it's kind of a Band-Aid fix for me right now.

**Q. Thanks for your time, and it's great to see you back in competition. From your point of view regarding the Ryder Cup, what is going to be needed for you to have the real chance to win in Bethpage?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think we've got the talent. Obviously the last Ryder Cup was huge for us. I think we get a lot of confidence from that.

I don't know how they are going to set Bethpage up and I don't know how many of the guys is going to be on that team has been there and seen it. I think the biggest thing that will, at least, probably take me on surprise and a lot of other guys, as well, is the crowd, the home crowd.

Obviously the New Yorkers are going to be loud and they are not going to be holding back. I think our resilience and just toughness and embracing the challenge, I think that's going to be the most important thing for Team Europe.

BRIONY CARLYON: Viktor, thank you for your insights, and all the best this week.

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