

The Ryder Cup

Tuesday, 26 September, 2023

Rome, Italy

Marco Simone

Team Europe

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Joined by Viktor Hovland from Team Europe. Viktor, just give us a sense of your experience so far and being here this week. It's been a terrific individual season for you. How much are you looking forward to translating that into the team environment?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's been a great year for me. Played a lot of good golf, but this is the Ryder Cup, and that all kind of goes out the window. You're here to perform for the team, and obviously after what happened two years ago, I think we're all pretty motivated to get the Cup back to Europe.

And I think we're all just having a blast, and we're going to try to get the best out of our game as possible this week.

Q. Speaking about Whistling Straits two years ago, what were your personal learnings and takeaways from that? Can you elaborate a little how you've reflected on that event? Personally for you it went very well in many ways.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, I felt like I played okay that week. I hit the ball well enough to get a few points. We certainly met a very strong U.S. Team, and it was hard to get those points. I felt like I played okay, but I lacked the special things in the matches to where you really flip the momentum around and you can build on a big putt or an up-and-down or maybe a chip-in or something like that. That just wasn't there.

I hit a lot of great iron shots into tough pin positions, and it was blowing. It played hard. But I just didn't finish it off.

I think this time around with all the work that I've done on the short game and some of the accomplishments that I've made in the last few tournaments and throughout the year, I feel like I'm a lot more accomplished.

Even if I don't have my game or I don't hit it as well as I would have liked, I still feel like I can win or get



MARCO SIMONE
ROME, ITALY

up-and-down from a terrible spot. It's not like, oh, I have to be in the perfect spot to have a chance to win the match.

There's a belief and a confidence that I can get myself out of any situation, and I think that's a huge turnaround from last time.

Q. I just asked Jon Rahm the same question, but the World Rankings tell us that you, Jon and Rory are the three best players on the team. Does that bring any extra responsibility in your mind?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I think that's cool. You can use the ranking to look at, oh, the last six months or the last five months and all that stuff, but it just goes out the window this week. Whatever technically the 12th ranked player on their team could be the best player on their team right now, so just because someone is ranked a little bit higher on the World Rankings doesn't mean that they're going to be tougher to beat this week.

It's cool to have on the team. It gives you maybe a little bit of extra confidence or you feel a little bit better about the week, but we've still got to go out there and play like the best players in the world, and we've got to get some points for our team.

Q. Talking to guys like Paul McGinley, he speaks a lot about the rivalry that used to be more clear in the way that Europeans played in Europe, Americans played in America. Nowadays you guys pretty much all play together. You've grown up with Collin Morikawa. How does it affect the rivalry of the Ryder Cup in your opinion?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I can't speak for the guys that played in the past, but it seems that we probably hate each other less than guys used to in the past.

But sure, hate is a big motivator to do well. That's just a fact. But I think where we are now, we're more motivated maybe to win for our country and continent. We want to win for Europe. It's not so much to -- obviously we want to beat the Americans. We enjoy that.



But it's not because we hate the other team. It's because we love Europe and we want to do well for the people that support us.

Q. You're making some funny films about your short game. It's really fun. Talk about how you're working on your short game; maybe you have some new coach for the short game? Tell me some stuff about this.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, I got together with Joe Mayo at the start of the year, and it's no secret that I've never been great around the greens, and to play at the highest level it's very difficult to beat the best players in the world if you can't get the ball up-and-down, especially when the courses get tough. You're going to miss greens and you're going to be in spots where you're going to have to figure it out.

He basically just explained the physics of why I didn't have a great short game before. It wasn't because I wasn't talented enough or I didn't have the, quote/unquote, hands to do it. I was essentially just getting a little too shallow into the ball and getting way behind it.

And it's great if you want to hit long drives or fast balls. Around the green you want to slow the ball down, so you want to essentially do the opposite of what you do to hit a drive.

When he explained that certain feels that I have in my short game and just explained how to do that, it just kind of clicked to me, and I was able to do it right away on the practice green.

Obviously it takes a while for it to feel comfortable and do it in tournaments, but as soon as I got the feel and it clicked to me, it was just a matter of putting the work in, and yeah, just getting more comfortable.

Q. Watching the Solheim Cup, I was thinking that there's such a lot of Northern European players in women's golf and in men's golf. How does it come about? Is that a coincidence, or if you go back into your childhood, where does it all come from?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's a great question. It's something that I haven't really thought about. Seeing the European team had five Swedes on that team, that's pretty cool to see, even though I'm Norwegian. It's pretty cool to see that a lot of Scandinavians are doing so well.

You know what, I really don't know. They must have -- obviously they have a great culture for golf there. The Swedes, they have a lot of players on the men's tour. I just think they have a great culture there.

I think there's a lot more players that play men's professional golf, and I think that just makes it a little bit difficult, for example, for five men or male Swedish players to, for example, be on this team. I think it's just a sheer numbers problem. But obviously that proves that they have a great culture that they're doing in Sweden, for example.

Q. Does foursomes, because it's so unique as a format, sort of require one of the players to take a leadership role of the team on the course, and if so, what does a good fulfillment of that role look like?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know if it's a leadership role, but I think it's -- you're just trying to figure out what's the best strategy to win your matches, and some people might be a little less talkative or maybe a little bit more laid back or don't talk as much so the other guy maybe fills that role.

But we're both teammates, and we're trying to create a rapport where one guy can trust the other and vice versa.

I think it's more just about creating trust. I don't think it's one guy has to say, okay, I'll take the ownership of everything. I think it's more, okay, what do I have to do to fill this partnership.

I think we just try to lean on each other in that way.

STEVE TODD: Viktor, thanks for joining us. We wish you well this week.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports