

DP World India Championship

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New Delhi, Delhi, India

Delhi GC

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



DP WORLD
INDIA CHAMPIONSHIP

THE MODERATOR: Viktor, welcome to India for the first time for you. Just give us a sense of, you've not been here very long, but have you had a chance to look around and what you've made of the course so far?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I've been here less than 20 hours so it's gone by very quick. Got to see five holes on the golf course and hit some balls on the range and get warmed up. It's very nice. It has a cool feel, especially seeing some old buildings and some ruins and stuff. I think that's really cool.

It kind of gives me a little bit of a Mayakoba feel, and I've had some success there, so already good vibes being here.

Q. Obviously it's the second event for the DP World Tour in India, an incredible field has gathered. How important do you think it is for the stars of the game to come to a place like India and help grow the game here?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I think it's really cool. This is not a place a lot of us players have been to before and played golf. Yeah, looking forward to just kind of seeing how it goes, and hopefully there will be some people out there even though there's not that much space out there, but hopefully a lot of people will come out and cheer for us and kind of get to see the best players in the world up close. I think it's really cool.

Q. I wanted to ask, you picked up a neck injury during the 2025 Ryder Cup, and I wanted to ask how you're doing now.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, took about a week and a half off after the Ryder Cup and didn't really touch a club, and then was kind of running out of time a little bit to make a decision if I wanted to come here or not. I played two 18-hole rounds in a row back-to-back, and my neck felt okay, so I decided to fly over here and give it a chance.

I think one of the big things, you don't have to hit driver out here, very much at least. That definitely helps my neck

because it's definitely the driver, I think, that gives me the biggest amount of pain. Hopefully we'll stick to the 3-iron, and the neck will be fine.

Q. The PGA Tour has changed their exempt status from Top 125 to top 100. Where do you stand on this decision? Do you think it's better for golf? Can you just talk me through it a little bit?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Man, it's tough. At the end of the day, I think we just want to play in the biggest tournaments, the best tournaments against the best field. I think the Tour is obviously trying to do that. I honestly don't even know. I think having more cards is obviously good for competition, but at the same time, I think they're trying to get to a place where you have obviously Memorial and Bay Hill and these bigger tournaments and then you also have a lot of smaller events, and trying to get both of those tournaments to work in the same league is tough, and I think they're trying to mitigate some of that.

But I don't know if reducing the amount of cards is the way to do that. I don't really know. But I can see both sides of the argument. I just don't really have too much of a -- a strong enough opinion to say much more than that, to be honest.

Q. Have you had a practice round on this golf course? You were talking about using a driver giving you a lot of pain, but do you think you will be using your driver on this course because it's very well-known for being narrow.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I only got to play five holes. I've never seen the golf course before. I got in last night. But I've got 18 holes tomorrow in the pro-am, so I'll get to see the whole course. But from what it sounds like, I probably won't hit any drivers out there. I think there's a couple holes, maybe 10 and 14 and 18 is what I've heard potentially you can hit driver, but I think I'll just kind of stick to the 3-iron or maybe 3-wood a couple places here and there. There will be a lot of irons this week.

Q. Do you also feel there can be a home advantage because in the field there are people who have won

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titles on the Asian Tour like Anirban Lahiri and you have Shubhankar who has won an Asian Tour event here. Do you think there is any home advantage or do you think it is pretty open?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, at the end of the day, the course doesn't care where you're from, but at the end of the day, if you're from India, you might have -- you just feel more comfortable, everything is more familiar. I think a lot of guys, it's a long way to travel, a little jet lag, it's hot out there, it's a very challenging golf course being so narrow and different grass types and all of that. I'm sure the natives here will feel a little bit more comfortable, but at the end of the day you've got to hit the shots and make the putts, so we'll see how it goes.

Q. It's the first time competing here in Delhi Golf Club. It's a course very well known for very narrow fairways and precision around the greens and the short game. You spoke recently about a dip in confidence in your short game before Valspar and you had this incredible resurgence Sunday at Valspar. How do you carry that momentum into a course like this where you can't prioritize the long game, you can't go for the greens, and how do you adapt and prepare for something like that?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I've been struggling with my driver, especially off the tee. I've been not hitting it very well this year. But my iron game has been very solid. So for me to kind of take the driver out of the bag where everyone has to hit irons, I think that definitely plays into my game, and hopefully I can hit a lot of greens and won't have to chip that much.

I kind of like the grass type. It's very sandy around the greens, so I think some places where you have to get the lob wedge out and chip it, it's going to be very challenging for a lot of players because if you just hit slightly behind it, it doesn't really come out. The club just digs instead. I think you'll be seeing a lot of putters around the greens if you're in the fairway.

Then from the rough, it's quite tricky. It's thick Bermuda but the ball sits down every time and it's very firm underneath. It's kind of tough to gauge how the ball is going to come out. Sometimes you have to hit it like a bunker shot or you can hit it just normal and it comes out nice.

I think I'll be spending some time here the next couple of days getting used to it, but at the end of the day, I think my short game is definitely good enough, and I feel comfortable with these shots around here. If I can just hit my irons well and make some putts, I don't think the short game will be what's holding me back.

Q. Quick question on your equipment. You recently went back to vintage Ping. Are you still keeping that? Are you changing --

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Driver or --

Q. Putter.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Putter, yeah. I think it was maybe -- I think I had one week at the Genesis earlier this year where I switched into a different putter, and then after that I've just gone back to my same old trusty. Same putter that I think I've had in for six years now, so it's definitely not coming out of the bag anytime soon.

Q. I know you've been hiding an Indian in your house back in Stillwater, and I know he would be really useless as far as this golf course is concerned because I don't think Rayhan has played this golf course ever.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, I don't think so.

Q. What kind of things did you ask him about India and what to expect, even though he has grown up in Dubai? And what kind of things did he ask you when you guys were playing together a few days ago considering that he so narrowly missed his Korn Ferry card and all the things that happened like the clerical error on the DP Tour to take him out of a tournament? What kind of advice did he seek from you, being such a senior player and a friend?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, we really haven't seen each other that much for many months now even though we live together in Oklahoma. I think it was four months ago since I was last back in Oklahoma. But the last couple weeks we were both there, so we've been, yeah, practising, and I didn't get to play much at all, but we played together a few days ago, 18 holes with a lot of other guys, and it was nice to be able to do that again.

We'd just get dinner and sit around the house and chat. I asked him a little bit about India, what to expect and all that, and he thought I'd like it very much. He'd heard a lot of cool stuff about the golf course, how narrow it was and all that stuff. But yeah, pertaining to kind of what he's been going through, he's had some adversity. A little bit disappointed that he wasn't able to get the job done there at the Patriots Course, the last Korn Ferry event that he played. But I think his game is trending in the right direction and he's working on some good stuff. At the end of the day, I think he's doing the right things, so he just needs to continue and keep working and keep getting

better.

Q. If I can ask you, what's the most unexpected thing you have ever seen on a golf course? I know you've been talking a lot about UFOs, but I don't know if you know what all can you over here on a golf course?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know. See some weird shots and stuff, but --

Q. Animals?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, yeah, as I said, this course kind of reminds me of Mayakoba a little bit, and they have some crazy animal life. I don't know what they have here this week, but I'm not going to try to look in the trees too much hopefully. I'm going to try to stay away from the bushes.

Q. There was a lot of debate around the final round withdrawal from the Ryder Cup. You had a lot of strong reactions from fans and players. How did you view that entire debate and would you like to change anything about it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that's a good question. The whole situation was pretty upsetting, just the fact that I didn't get to play, and I felt really bad for Harris, who also didn't get to play a match, even though there was nothing wrong with him. He just didn't get to play, and he was upset about that, and I feel very bad for not being able to compete.

It's tough. I think we're so used to in sports that if you can't play because you're hurt, obviously that should be a loss of point. But I think in the spirit of the Ryder Cup and the spirit of the game and the history of it, knowing that this Ryder Cup is just a part of many, many Ryder Cups to come, I think it's more of a gentlemen's agreement that okay, you were hurt this time and maybe the next time there's a guy on the U.S.'s team and we're all kind of sympathetic about the person being hurt and not being able to play.

I think there's kind of a mutual understanding that if we were healthy we would all go out there and play. I don't think people are using that to really finagle the system and try and squeak by.

Also to the other point, if you do change the rule and you give away a point, now there's also the angle that okay, knowing that the other team is going to put out their best player most likely in the first few groups, they can just kind of put me out as a sacrificial lamb and take the L against their best player. So there's other ways around it, and I

think -- I don't think there's any ideal way to do it, but the most -- I think that's just a better way overall to do it, even though it's just a tough situation, and at the end of the day, I think we'd all be wanting to go out there and play.

Q. Having players like yourself and many of your Ryder Cup teammates here obviously inspires the next generation of Indian golfers here and so many kids who probably wouldn't have thought of taking golf up as a future option. On the other side, for someone like you when you come up playing in a different country, what is your takeaway from playing events like this?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, just from my own sake, I love just traveling the world and seeing different places and playing different golf courses, playing in front of different fans. I'm a very big fan of the Indian culture. I think it's just so vast and a lot of old history. I love seeing old ruins and temples, and yeah, I think it's really, really cool. Even though I don't know enough about it, I definitely pique my interest, and just being here and seeing a little glimpse of it is really interesting. Obviously you guys have over a billion people, and if more kids in particular can get introduced to the game and have a chance to play, I think that's really cool to be a part of.

Q. Have you interacted anything related to the course with the natives? Have they been nice enough to give you some tips?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't seen any of those guys in a while. I haven't seen them so far here this week. But I'm not so sure they want to share all their secrets out here. But I think the course is pretty right there in front of you. You've got to hit the ball straight. You can all see the fairway and the green is right there.

I think we all kind of know what to do.

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