

# U.S. Open Championship 2024

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina, USA

Pinehurst Resort & C.C. (Course No. 2)

## Viktor Hovland

### Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Please join me in welcoming to the interview area Viktor Hovland.

Talk about what you're seeing out of the course this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I've only played the front nine. Played it yesterday. I've only been here once before, and I thought it was -- it's a lot more severe than I remember it being. I think last time I was here it was really soft. I'm sure the pins were kind of middle of the greens. I didn't really think too much about potential pin placements.

It's a hard golf course, but it's cool. I like it.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about Scottie and what he's been doing and what your impression is about the run he's been on for this period of time.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Very impressive. Like, obviously we can play well and compete against him when we're playing well, but he just seems to bring that game every single week, kind of is taking the level of consistency just to another level. Just super impressive.

Like, you can have a nice little run, but then most of the time you kind of fall back to whatever, a more average week. But his average week is just really, really good. It's just very, very impressive to watch.

Definitely makes me work harder and motivates me to get better and try to compete against him.

But it's super cool to watch.

**Q. I've seen you rehearse this kind of head back, side bend move. Just wondering if you could explain some of the specifics to me and generally how it's feeling, how the swing is feeling these days.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I probably shouldn't rehearse that because that's what I don't want to do. I've just been side bending and tilting a little bit from the top of the backswing, and it just gets me in trouble. I need to kind of do the opposite of that. That's just what I'm working on.

**Q. How is it feeling just kind of generally, the swing?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It hasn't been quite as good as I'd like to. But played nine holes yesterday, and it was a little so and so. But went to the range afterward, and I felt like I found a little better feel to accomplish the same thing. I'm curious to see what happens when I go out there and play today and the next couple days, kind of see how that works.

I know what I need to do. It's just kind of finding the feel that accomplishes it in the best way possible.

**Q. Your chipping has been something that has been discussed a lot. Do you feel like you'll chip a lot this week, or do you feel yourself putting it from off the green?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think there will be a decent amount of putts because I think with how grainy it is around the greens, and there are certain slopes that are so steep...

A couple spots yesterday, like for example over the green on 8, the drop-off is so severe, and I hit a couple chips that were really nice and spinning. You do that a couple times and you can get a little bit cocky doing it. But because it's so hard into the grain, if you're just off by a little bit, you're going to look like a fool.

I think if you take an average of 20 shots, the putter is going to be way better than the chip is. I think in a lot of spots, I'm going to putt it, but there are some spots where, okay, I think the chip is better.

It's kind of hard to give you an answer. Maybe it'll be somewhere close to 60/40 with putter maybe.

**Q. You said you like it here. What specifically do you like about the challenge you're going to face this week?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I just think it's just really a cool design. I think off the tee it's fair. Off the tee there are some narrow fairways, but it's generous enough, and if you



hit it off-line you can potentially get penalized.

There is some luck involved in missing the fairways here. Sometimes you might have a good lie, and sometimes it's just a hack-out.

But I think just visually it looks really cool off the tee. I'm just a big fan of greens that are raised up and rolls off on the sides. I think that's kind of how golf courses should be designed. I just think it's just the best way possible to design greens.

I think in some spots, some of the pin locations look a little bit suspect, so it'll be interesting to see how it works out. But I just think it's really cool.

You've got to drive it well into the greens. It's a very high value of hitting greens. Then with so much slope and how fast the greens are, you've got to really have some touch on the greens, as well.

**Q. Yesterday Wyndham said the greens were borderline. How would you describe them?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, because of all the rain that happened a couple nights ago, it's soft. Like the greens are not that firm. Not to throw my caddie under the bus, but if he's putting the pins in the right locations where the pins were last time, then there are just multiple spots where hitting a putt to a disc, I miss it maybe a foot low side, with just a hair too much speed, the ball is off the green. It doesn't just roll off the green, sometimes it rolls off the green and into the bush. Seems to me that some of those pins are a little bit close to the dropoffs.

So I don't really know where they're going to end up putting the pins. But if they were, in my opinion, borderline yesterday when the greens were soft, what if it starts blowing up a little bit and the greens just keep getting firmer and faster. It'll be just interesting to see.

I've only played nine holes, so I'm not going to make a quick judgment. But that was my first impression.

**Q. Can you describe the difference in how you felt leaving the Masters versus leaving the PGA.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, it's night and day. I was pretty miserable leaving the Masters. I think that's just one of those things where you kind of have to hit whatever rock bottom is or at least feeling like you hit a pretty low point because I think that's when you pull yourself out of it or you've got to make some decisions to course correct.

I'm just happy at some point that I was able to course

correct, and now we're on a way better path.

**Q. Was there any sense of, Man, I missed an opportunity to get my first major?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: At the Masters?

**Q. No, at the PGA.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah. I mean, obviously a little bit disappointed. But the context of being, like, not really wanting to show up at a golf tournament because I just knew it wasn't good enough, to, Wow, I actually just had a chance to win a major championship without my best stuff, like I just found a feel that was better. But I still didn't feel comfortable all week.

I'm just taking the positives out of that. Like yes, you don't get endless amounts of opportunities to win major championships, so obviously when you're in the heat of the moment, you want to take advantage of those.

At the end of the day I'm just happy that I'm playing better. If I keep kind of improving and I'm on the right trajectory, then hopefully in the future I get one done.

**Q. Another Scottie question. From what you see, what's the biggest part of his game that's making him so good right now?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, you can't win that many tournaments or be up there on the leaderboard without doing everything well. Because if he had holes in his game, he wouldn't perform as well as he would.

I think he just hits it very, very straight. It's very reliable. We all hit great shots out here, and there are a lot of guys that are impressive, but you know the old saying: It's not about how good your good shots are, it's how good your bad shots are.

He's certainly playing a game where his bad shots are still good. Like they're still in play. He doesn't have to worry about, Man, I hope this big miss doesn't show up because there is no big miss.

When you couple that with a really, really high-level short game, it's just easy to play the game of golf.

**Q. With some of the luck involved of missing the fairway, you could end up in a terrible spot or you could be fine. Are you changing your approach to your strategy off the tee? Are you playing more conservatively because of that, or are you just accepting the reality of what could happen?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I'd say in general, I think the best players play aggressively off the tee and conservatively into the greens. I think this course is basically that strategy, just on steroids.

Not that I'm going to be hitting driver everywhere, because there are some holes that play for positioning, but I will definitely be pretty aggressive off the tee.

I like hitting drivers because if you miss it, you still might have a decent chance from a fairway bunker or the bush, whatever you want to call it, especially into some of these greens where they're so demanding and you have to hit such a small target.

I think having a shorter club in is very important. But then into the greens you've got to play very, very conservatively. I think just hitting the greens itself is of high value.

**Q. What are the challenges between transitioning into the beginning of the week where you're trying to find just that swing feel to competitive mode where you're focused on getting the ball in the hole?**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, ideally you don't really want to start the week off by trying to find a feel. You want to be just ready to go and know your stuff is good enough. Then it's a matter of just purely getting to know the golf course, where you want to hit it, where you want to miss it, dialing in the speed, what is the grass turf, how does that interact with your ball when it lands, how does it feel with your club when it's moving through the ground, all that stuff.

But optimally you don't want to think about technique when you're out here trying to win a major championship. But that's the game of golf. It's like your game could be good, but then one week something happens and you've got to tweak something.

Hopefully you spend as little time as possible trying to manicure the golf swing or find a feel.

**Q. You mentioned that you were working on something, so I didn't know how you make that transition when you're just trying to get better and then focusing on that tournament round.**

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's kind of a balance. You want to obviously be on a trajectory that makes you improve over time but also play the best golf that you can right now.

If there's a feel that's going to make you play better, well now you've got to find the feel. That's the easiest thing for

you to think about when you're playing golf because all that stuff goes out the window when you're out there in a tournament.

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