



Viktor Hovland

Press Conference
Tuesday, April 8, 2025

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It was a busy morning here. We've had Northern Ireland, Spain, Denmark, Sweden. It sounds like a European vacation. It's now Norway's turn. Viktor, like to welcome you back to Augusta National on behalf of all the members here, and I also want to congratulate you on your recent success down in Tampa and welcome you. I'd like to begin by asking you a question about your experiences here. This is your sixth Masters coming up. You were low amateur back in 2019. What improvements or how much have you learned about the game by playing here four or five times in competition, and how does that impact your approach?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's a good question. It's just a beautiful place. Every time you come here, the first couple of days you just really let it all sink in. I do think now that I've been here, this is my sixth time here, you get over that awe feeling maybe after the first couple of days and then you realize, okay, what's the best use of my time.

I feel like I've gotten into some better routines and I know exactly the shots that I need to work on. The first few years here, yeah, you don't really have a clue what's going on, you just try to put one foot ahead of the other and see how the week ends up.

Yeah, I do feel like I come here a little bit more prepared.

Q. You feel ready to go here?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think so. I still haven't seen the course yet, but yeah, should be good.

Q. You're coming off of a good victory. You're mainly playing Signature Events and major events, but now you played a regular PGA TOUR tournament and won. How does that feel coming into this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It feels great to win, obviously. As I've been vocal about, it wasn't the best of my game that week, but it's really cool to see that you can still get the job done, and haven't been in that position in a while. To feel the juices flowing was great, and I think it's going to help me this week. It seems like the juices are flying on every shot out here. This place makes you feel uncomfortable, but I feel way more prepared this week because of that.

Q. You've talked a lot about your swing and your coaching changes and everything over the last year, probably more than anybody else, and that's probably because you're so open and transparent about the process. Why is that? Why aren't you just giving us stock answers so that you're not constantly perpetuating this cycle of having to answer more?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's a great question. It probably would benefit me to shut my mouth a little bit more. But I don't know, I don't mind being honest. I think if you hold it in, it almost becomes -- the fear almost becomes bigger instead of when you speak the truth out there, you kind of desensitize it in a way.

Maybe it's not the best analogy, but if you've seen "8 Mile" with Eminem there, it's like before his final rap battle, he kind of disses himself. It's like: Here I am, what else you got on me?

I don't know, I think it kind of just puts it out there so you can just focus on the things that I need to focus on and it's just get back to work and get a little bit better. Yeah. I don't know what else to say.

Q. I want to make sure I understand this because I saw an interview where you think you think the issue is in your lead wrist not being flexed enough on the backswing and that's what is causing the handsy release. Am I understanding that correctly?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I don't want to get super in the weeds here, but it wasn't necessarily the lead wrist flexion in the backswing, but it was how those wrist angles were being changed in the downswing because of how the forces were moving in the backswing. And that was due to a multitude of different movements.

I've really had to -- the last year and a half I've always been searching for that one thing that was going to put all the pieces back together. It's been a little bit more complicated than that. I've had to fix this one thing here and that one thing there, so I'm able to swing like I used to.

It's been a little bit more challenging than that. But in the downswing, for example, my lead wrist has just been going into more radial, and that for my pattern is just really tough. Just kind of reverse engineering that and figuring out how I can avoid doing that is what we've been working on.

Q. And the problem starts on the backswing; that's where you're trying to fix the forces that are happening on the backswing and that's leading to what you'd like to see on the downswing?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Pretty much, but not just purely pertaining to the lead wrist flexion. It's been other body movements that's been impeding that.

Q. Just to double-check, you haven't seen the golf course this week or you haven't seen it since last year?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't seen it since last year.

Q. What did the preparation look like last week or the last couple weeks for this tournament? Where were you? You talk about knowing the shots that you have to hit here. Is there a particular shot that you weren't confident with a few weeks ago that you're more confident now?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I've had a great couple weeks in Orlando. Been spending a lot of time with Grant Waite, and it's been fun seeing the improvements that we've had over the last couple weeks, putting a lot of time into obviously the golf swing and seeing improvements on the range, but also going out on the course and seeing that I'm able to pull the shots off and spending a lot of time around the greens, being able to hit the low bump-and-runs, the higher softer shots. Because if you don't have those out here, it becomes extremely difficult to compete.

So I do feel a lot better about my game. It's just a matter of executing in the tournament, and sometimes that's a different story. But I at least feel like I'm able to do so.

I have that belief again, so that's exciting, whether it happens this week or further down the road. We don't know, but it's been fun to see improvements in practice the last couple weeks.

Q. I listened to your appearance on the UAP podcast, and I was curious how questioning things like UAPs and UFOs help you on the golf course and then vice versa?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Man, I don't know how to answer that, but yeah, it's just an interest of mine, and obviously it's become somewhat of a topic in the news, and it really comes down to kind of what is onto logical truth and how we view reality itself.

I think it's just interesting when you have an open mind and you question anything. I think even in the golf swing you can get very dogmatic and you look at things as, oh, this has to be a truth, this has to be correct, and sometimes the beliefs that you hold the most deeply can obfuscate yourself. When you question things and look at things from

different angles, you might get to a deeper truth.

I think that's just a fascinating endeavor to engage in, and hopefully it leads you closer to the right direction, but that's kind of the fun of it.

Q. Do you ever find yourself having to pause going down certain rabbit holes or anything like that?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Pause, it's more like, okay, I know this is getting into territory that's very speculative. But I think as long as you have an objective kind of mindset while looking into this information, I think it's just fun.

You don't have to live and die by every word you read or thing you hear. It's more like you observe it from a different place, an objective place, and then you go, hey, maybe this is true, maybe it's not, and then you put that into a placeholder of, okay, let's just wait for more information to see if that corroborates what you already read.

Q. Just curious how you feel this year compared to when you were here playing this tournament last year.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's a big difference. It's a bit fun just to show up to the last -- I'd say the last week has been extremely good. The first week in Orlando we were still making improvements and going in the right direction, but last week I felt like, man, I can just step on the range and not having to think too much and see the ball come off the face in a good direction, powerful ball flight, and didn't have to manipulate the face to make it go where I wanted to. I could kind of just swing freely.

Then every single day has been more or less the same feel, just kind of continuing in the right direction, versus last year it was extremely challenging because I was standing on the range, I was on the course, had no idea where the ball was going, if it was going left or right. And on top of that, it was not very solid, either.

It's a frustrating place to be, especially when you have the conditions that we had last year. But yeah, I'm feeling a lot better. Whether we can get that out on the course and equate to a good score, that's a different story. But as long as I'm feeling good about my game, then at least hopeful that I can play well, that's kind of all I can ask for right now. It feels good to be able to say that.

Q. Does Grant think about things in a similar way to you personality-wise? Are you more similar or different?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I'd say he's a little bit more on the technical side, but we do speak the same language. I think, as I mentioned earlier, I was kind of hoping for that one or two feels that would put all this back in place.

And I think he was a guy that was necessary for me to kind of go through all the steps and be a little bit more tedious in this process because my motor pattern changed to where I was making some inefficient movements as my motor pattern. So I had to re-learn some of the things that I used to do, and that was frustrating.

But I think now that we got over that hump, I think there's more the small nuances where you don't have to get too down in the details anymore. I think that's been great to kind of get over that hump.

Q. A bit of a continuation on some of the themes today, but you're obviously a very inquisitive human being, whether it's breaking down a golf swing or learning about ancient history. This maybe is a little bit meta, but I wonder if you think often about how viewing the world through your lens translates to success in professional golf and what the pros and cons of your world view can be?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, I think you have to -- it's good to learn from others and read stuff, but you kind of have to experience things yourself and always be open to learning because I think just being honest about what you know, it's like, I don't know anything. I really don't.

When you try to put yourself in a position to where you can learn and try it out for yourself, kind of view the world as you're a scientist and you're trying things for yourself and then writing down or seeing the results of the things that you try and then you try something different to see if that works better, I think that's just an exciting way to go through life

instead of just kind of being in a mundane routine where you do the same things every single day and hoping for a better result. That's not really how I'm wired. I just like to try new things and see what happens.

If you do that in hopefully a rational way, it should lead to better results because when you see that things aren't working, you get off of that and try to course correct all the time. You just always try to question what you're doing to see if there's a better or more efficient way to do it instead.

Q. Rumors through the grapevine: New driver, new shaft in the bag?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, last couple of days back in Orlando, I'd say my iron game has been really, really nice, but still was just having a hard time with the driver to get it exactly how I wanted to.

So I asked Ken from PING to see if he could send some of the new drivers that I tested in the past, but when I wasn't swinging it well, those misses were just accentuated. I hit those -- those high right shots that I had before were even higher and further to the right. I didn't really feel like testing it.

But now that my swing got in a better spot, I wanted to give it another go. I guess that new shaft is a little bit stiffer at the bottom, and with the G440, it's way more forgiving. So the heel strikes and the toe strikes I'm able to keep the ball speed up compared to the other mis-hits. And the spin is just way tighter. If I hit it off the toe, it doesn't drop down to 1,700; and if I hit it off the heel, it doesn't go to 3,200.

Really just excited about how much tighter the dispersion was and even getting a little bit more ball speed out with the new driver. Yeah, it'll be exciting to see how it goes out there.

Q. It's G440 LST Ventus Black; is that correct?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yes, the new Velocore Plus shaft, whatever. I'm not too big into shafts and stuff.

Q. What you found and were telling me about that Wednesday at Valspar, is that what worked? Secondly, are you still sticking with that swing thought?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, when I talked to you on Wednesday, that wasn't the thought that kind of has stuck with me until now, but it was, like, a part of the puzzle if that makes sense. But I got off of that a little bit. It was the same kind of principle, but I found a different way to accomplish the same thing, if that makes sense.

That's kind of what's fickle about this game is you can -- you know overall what you need to do, but there are many different ways of how to accomplish it. There's so many different feels that you can have that accomplishes the same thing, and that was just -- it was one way to help the issue, but it wasn't what really got the train back on track, if that makes sense.

Q. This is a tournament that really cherishes the amateurs. How did winning the U.S. Amateur help you in your development as a player and going on to pro golf?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It was incredible. I won my first college event just earlier that year in 2018, and then winning the U.S. Amateur just kind of completely changed my trajectory as an amateur golfer and potentially my career after that.

To show up here the following year as an amateur -- really barely only played one PGA TOUR event and then having to play a major championship, it's crazy. Obviously getting to see the history that they have here and how well they treat the amateurs, showing up for the Amateur Dinner, staying at the Crow's Nest, all those little things, it's truly a special thing to be a part of.

Q. You were trying a couple different putters the last few months. Which one is in the bag this week, and are there any other changes in the bag this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I went back to just the old gamer that I've always had. I think it's nice to experiment a little

bit, but then I realized it wasn't -- definitely wasn't the putter's fault. I just hadn't put too much time on the putting green.

I think just setting up putting drills and being consistent in practice, I got more confidence over the ball because I think that was the issue in tournaments. I just hadn't done the work.

And then I know that implicitly when I'm standing over the ball and just not being exactly sure, okay, I know this is the right read, how hard I need to hit the putt, still standing over the ball and questioning, am I aiming correctly, is my stroke good enough, just too much noise in my head.

I think I got that question answered that my usual gamer is good enough, and I've just got to stick to that.

Q. You mentioned the need to chip and pitch the ball well here. Overall what would you say this course exposes or challenges the most in your game?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: For me, it's definitely the short game. It just seems like this whole place is just set up in a way to where it doesn't allow you to get away with poor technique. It doesn't matter what it is. It's like you have to hit the ball a certain distance. You have to be able to hit the ball a certain height. You have to be able to curve the ball somewhat.

Around the greens, because it's a longer grass, it's always mowed into you, if you have a subpar technique, it's really going to punish you, especially when those greens are raised up, they're really slopey, they're really firm and fast. So if you don't put spin on the ball, you're going to have a really hard time.

Especially the bunkers, too, there's a lot of sand in the bunker. The type of strain that's in the sand, it makes it so that if you -- maybe at a different place, if you get a little bit more behind the ball and you lose the spin, well, now it's going to spin even less. And at those green complexes, you just can't survive.

It forces you to be kind of at the best in every single part of your game to be able to win this championship, and I think that's just a sign of a great tournament, that it truly tests the best players.

Q. When you're not swinging it like you'd like, you don't have the results that you'd like and you're in the public eye and having to answer questions about it, what's the key to not beating yourself up through that?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know if I'd be the best to answer that because I have beat myself up. I think it's just like when you know it's not good enough, I don't see a problem by saying that it's bad. It's just being honest because I know how good it can truly be.

I mean, it sucks when you're there and you're not seeing progress. It can feel a little bit futile. But as long as you're getting up every day and reevaluating what you're doing and trying to get better, I think that's kind of the most important thing. You're always trying to problem-solve instead of, yeah, it's frustrating when you're not getting the results, but there is always a solution. There is always an answer.

You've just got to find it and work in that direction. Until you find that, then you've just got to keep searching. There's another way to go about it. I don't like to give up, so you just have to persevere and get to work.