

PGA Championship

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

Viktor Hovland

Flash Quotes

THE MODERATOR: Viktor Hovland is with us after a 2-under 68 today for him in the first round of the 105th PGA Championship. Viktor, how would you summarize your day today?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Very pleased with today, especially after that start being 2-over through three. Getting it to 3-under, making five birdies, that was really, really cool.

Obviously not the best drive on 6 to make a bogey there, but to play that stretch 6, 7, 8, 9, 1-over par is not a bad score. I'm very pleased with 2-under today.

Q. Two questions: One, with your great ball-striking just coming in this week, did you feel like this course suited your game? Then, No. 2, I know you get asked a lot, but just where do you feel your pitching, short game is compared to maybe a year ago at this time?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, certainly I feel like this course fits me well, but it's one of those you can hit good shots and still miss fairways and greens, and that's where you do have to rely on your short game a little bit, but I hit a lot of greens today, so, obviously, that favored me.

When it comes to the chipping, I feel like I have every single shot in the bag. If I play a practice round, I can drop it down to the most short-sided shots and go for the hero shot. A lot of times I can pull it off. It's just kind of getting that -- or getting used to or getting comfortable to do that in tournament situations. Sometimes the tournament situations don't really call for those shots.

I really feel like my technique is really, really close. It's just about trusting it and just seeing it a bit more.

Q. Second straight major championship that your clothing is drawing some strong reactions. Do you dress this bright in your normal life?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No. I wear a lot of gray, black, and that's about it (laughing).



Q. Is this just like one of those things where you want to get the people talking, or...

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, Jay Lindbergh, they give me with this stuff and pay me money to do so, so I just show up and wear what they want me to wear.

Q. What's the specific challenge off the tee here, Viktor?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Specific challenge?

Q. Yeah, this golf course, how hard a driving course is it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I would say most of the fairways are pretty flat, but you get some tee shots where the fairway slopes a certain direction, and you've got crosswinds on almost every single hole. For me I like to cut it, and I had a couple of tee shots that I kind of was missing right a little bit, and that's where for me instead of trying to do something stupid and try to draw something up against the wind, I've got to be really precise with my start lines and kind of fit that cut into some of those fairways.

But, yeah, it's a hard driving course. Even if you drive it great, 50 percent of fairways is not bad at all.

Q. Does it remind you of any other course that you guys have played?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't played very much golf in the Northeast. I love this type of golf. It reminds me a little bit of Winged Foot or that type of golf course. Some of the courses that I played in Ohio in college, it kind of has that look.

But, yeah, I'm a big fan of this type of golf.

Q. How much did that 13 to 15 spark your round, kind of get you going?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that was nice. I felt like I didn't really hit any bad shots the first three holes, but I was 2-over par. I was a little bit disappointed with that. That's



kind of one of the things I feel like has been bugging me a little bit is that I've played better golf than my results have shown.

I was happy that I wasn't -- I didn't let it kind of affect me as much as maybe it has in the past. Obviously being able to bounce back with three birdies in a row, that kind of got me into a good position and then kept going there for a while as well.

Q. Looks like you can make birdies anywhere. Does that kind of help you hang in as well when you do have the tough start?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah. I think it does, but at the same time when you think -- when you feel like you can make a birdie on every hole even when they're really hard, sometimes I've messed myself up by getting too aggressive trying to go for some pins that I am just not supposed to go for.

I feel like that was one of the things that I did really, really well today. I hit a lot of greens. Even with a 9-iron or a pitching wedge, I'm just, okay, middle of the green, give myself a look for a par. Sometimes you make the putt, but most of the time you 2-putt and you go on to the next hole.

Q. What was the best approach shot you feel like you hit today out of the rough?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Out of the rough. Well, the third shot on 6 was pretty nice from -- after hitting it in the water, I had a 6-iron from, I guess, it was 235. I didn't even know what the pin was because I was just thinking about the front yardage. I hit that one up there to 20 feet and made a stress-free bogey, which on that hole is not the end of the world.

Out of the rough, I didn't hit too many out of the rough. Some of the time, I just kind of had to lay up and play for short of the green.

Q. What's the farthest you can usually kind of carry it when you are in the rough, with the next shot.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Like out of the rough?

Q. Yeah.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Just completely depends on the lie. Sometimes when it's sitting down but it's not too thick, which for the most part out there, it's really thick. But when you get that kind of half-and-half, you can kind of with a 7-iron or 6-iron, you can hit it really far because it gets launching and it has no spin. Whereas for the most part

when it's sitting down in that rough, it just doesn't get airborne at all.

On No. 1 today I basically had to hit a lob wedge out of it and just chip it out 25 yards because I couldn't even take on the water that was 60 yards in front of me. Just completely depends on the lies out here.

Q. Obviously your reputation is a pretty upbeat, happy guy. Here we are at a major where everybody has got their grinding game face on. How do you deal with that? Do you find yourself being more -- a little toned down?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, it's been -- aye been kind of struggling a little bit putting too much pressure on myself. When I get off to a bad start, I let that bother me a little bit too much; it has in the past.

I had a great practice round with Webb Simpson earlier this week, and I think last time he played here, he said he finished 20th. He had a triple-bogey and a couple of double-bogeys, and he still finished 20th. He kind of helped me just kind of hammer the fact in that pars are good, middle of the green is good. Even if you make a couple of bogeys, everyone is going to make bogeys. It's just a matter of kind of fighting through it.

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