

PGA Championship

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Rochester, New York, USA

Oak Hill Country Club

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Viktor Hovland is joining us now on the second day of the 105th PGA Championship. Viktor, how would you sum up your round today?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it was a good day today. Kind of similar game plan as yesterday. Just try to hit fairways and middle of the green on almost every single hole. Really didn't try to go for a whole lot of pins and just giving myself a lot of looks. Happened to make a couple of nice putts.

When I was out of position, I made some really nice up-and-downs. It was a good day.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start taking questions.

Q. It's a fascinating leaderboard. Really nice and exciting to look at. How does it feel from your point of view to be right back in contention, very much in the mix at a major tournament?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously these tournaments are what you dream about winning and you practice so hard to play in. It's nice to be back to have a chance, but at the same time, we've got a lot of golf left. We're only halfway, and a lot of things can happen.

So I just have to keep being patient and hitting middle of the greens and, yeah, just let the pieces fall wherever they fall.

Q. But is it exciting? Take us inside the mind just for a few seconds of Viktor Hovland.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It's exciting, but you have to focus on every single shot that you are hitting. Your mind can easily start to wander, and you hit a bad shot because of that, and now suddenly it's not as exciting. You have to focus on the task at hand.

Q. Earlier this year you talked about some short game work that you've been doing. Can you just talk about the progress with that so far?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's been great. I've had some rounds the last couple of months where I've gained over a shot a round or on one specific round. I've had other rounds where I've given it away a little bit, but I feel like every time I miss a green, now I've got a shot to get out of there. It's not, crap, how is this going to turn out? That's huge just to have that confidence.

I feel like I showed a couple of those shots at least today on the round today out of the bunkers.

Q. Can you just give us some thoughts on your own outfit?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, obviously going to Oklahoma State, I like the orange. I think the orange here on the side was maybe a bit much. I would have just gone for a white shirt. Other than that, I think it's pretty sweet.

The belt is pretty awesome. Yeah, it's whatever (laughing).

Q. Has Rickie said anything to you about it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, he hasn't. I haven't seen him all week. I heard a couple of guys in the crowd were yelling "Go, Rickie." I guess, what's the expression? Impersonation is the biggest form of flattery or something.

Q. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. You were pretty steady through 6, 7, 8, 9. That's by far the toughest stretch on the golf course. What was your game plan there, especially on 6?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think I hit it in the practice rounds, and then yesterday I hit it in the water there off the tee.

Basically today I was just going to try to hit it left and hit that nice little cut. If you hit the fairway off of that tee, 70 percent of the work is kind of done. I had a nice little 6-iron on the second shot, and I wasn't even thinking about that pin. I was just trying to hit it middle of the green and made an easy par there.

That stretch, 6, 7, 8, 9, is a very tough stretch. You can't



win it there, but you can certainly lose the tournament there.

Q. Do you feel 6 is a fair hole?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I really do like it. I think for as narrow as it is and how long it is, I think the second bunker on the left is maybe a little bit too severe because that is kind of the bail-out. That's fine. There should be some bunkers there to protect the bail-out, but I think the lip is a little bit too high for shots. You can hit a pretty good drive and hit it in the left rough -- or left bunker, and now you don't have a shot for the green. I would like to see the lip be a little bit shorter so guys would kind of go for the green from there.

Q. That orange looks even better on TV, by the way.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: (Laughing).

Q. Almost afraid to bring this up, but this is the 10th consecutive round that you've finished inside the top 10 on the leaderboard at a major. Does that surprise you at all? What's your reaction to it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I haven't done great in the majors that I've played before. I've had some nice top-15 finishes and stuff like that, but I haven't quite been in contention.

I think that's been because I've just been a little bit young and stupid, just going after some pins that I'm not supposed to go for even though I'm feeling good about my ball-striking and it's easy to just feel like, yeah, I'm going to take it right at it and make a birdie here. Then you hit a decent shot, and then you're short-sided and make bogey or double, and you just can't do that in major championship golf.

You just have to wear out center of the green. If that putter gets hot, you can make some birdies.

Q. Did it take mistakes to learn that, or is that something you consciously worked on with somebody?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, I worked with Edoardo Molinari. He does my stats. My instructor, Joe Mayo, he had been watching me out on the road and watched me play a few tournaments. We like to relate a lot to poker. There are certain -- within strategy in poker, there's certain frequencies, certain things should happen, so you bet at certain frequencies. Basically I was ending up plugged in the bunker short-sided a few more times than you would think.

It seemed like it would happen once or twice a round or something like that where I would just be in a terrible spot and cannot make a par. So he reached out to Edoardo, and we crunched some numbers and saw that I was just a little too aggressive with my shorter irons.

Q. I guess that leads to the question, do you play poker?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I do, yeah.

Q. How do you do?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I haven't played enough to really know how much I win or how much I lose, but I like to play the game, and I like to learn about it.

Q. Can you take me through the shot into 18?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, hit a good drive down there on the right side, and the ball was pretty far below my feet. It was 162 meters to the pin.

Because of the rain, there was some moisture on the grass, so I thought the ball was going to go a little bit shorter, so I just decided to hit a little off-speed 7-iron and started middle of the green because I knew it was going to cut. As soon as I hit it, I saw the initial curve, and I thought it was going to be pretty good. That was a nice way to finish.

Q. The announcers always say, oh, you know, that will make dinner taste better or something like that when you birdie the last hole. Is it worth one shot? Is it worth incrementally more? Is there any difference when you make it three at the last?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: A 3 on the last at this golf course is pretty nice. Whether it's -- it doesn't really matter which hole it is. Birdies are hard to come by out here, but certainly nice to have a good finish. It makes you kind of maybe relax or ease into the next day, I guess, instead of finishing bogey, bogey; you have a little bit of a bitter taste in your mouth. But no, certainly pumped up for the weekend.

Q. What did you learn about this course playing it in the weather that you can take into tomorrow when we're going to have a lot more of this again?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: The rain, just thankfully we didn't have any wind, so that kind of helped us out. The ball goes a little bit shorter because the weather was supposed to be really hot today, almost 80 degrees. With that rain, the ball went a little bit shorter, and if you are in the rough,

it tends to make that rough a little bit juicier because it's wet.

At the end of the day, it makes the greens softer, and you can maybe be a hair more aggressive, so if you hit it good in the middle of the fairway, you can take advantage of it even though it's raining a little bit.

Q. As you look towards the weekend and being right in the middle of this thing and all the experiences you've accumulated, do you feel like you now have all the tools to win a major and get it done?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think so. The ball-striking is definitely there. Putting, you know, anything can happen, and I feel like a lot of the short game work that I've been doing the last couple of months are starting to show a little bit.

Some of the bunker shots that I hit today were really nice just to kind of keep the score together. Yeah, I believe I have all the tools in the bag. I just have to go out there and execute.

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