

The Memorial Tournament Presented By Workday

Sunday, June 4, 2023

Dublin, Ohio, USA

Muirfield Village

Viktor Hovland

Jack Nicklaus

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: All right. We would like to welcome Viktor Hovland the champion of the Memorial Tournament presented by Workday in 2023 and along with tournament host, Mr. Jack Nicklaus, of course.

Viktor, we'll just get started. That was an amazing finish, birdie at 17. That putt was obviously pretty important down the stretch and then playoff hole that was a big make right there. Just your thoughts on the back nine particularly today.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, had a nice start, was 1-under early after kind of relying on my putter in the beginning. Missed a short one on 7 and then bogeyed 8 and 9 and I think I was maybe four back at that point. I've been in that spot before where that kind of seems to be it for that tournament, but I was really proud of myself for fighting back, making a birdie on 10 and 11. Even though I made a bogey on 12, I didn't let that deter me. Birdieing 15 and 17 was -- yeah, it was awesome. I played 16, 17, 18, I think, 2-under the whole week. Yeah, those holes are -- I think I'll have nightmares playing those holes in my head.

THE MODERATOR: Well, with the win you move to No. 4 in the FedExCup. It's your fourth title, but it is your first on mainland USA. How meaningful is it to win Mr. Nicklaus's tournament as your first on the mainland?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's incredible. Obviously I feel like I've won a decent amount of tournaments for only being a pro for four years; however, they have been at low key places, resort courses, and abroad, so it feels really cool to get my first win on the U.S. soil, especially at a tournament like this where this week the golf course is arguably harder than most major championship golf courses we play and the crowds were amazing out there. It felt like a major. So it was a really cool that I was able to get it done at a place like this.

THE MODERATOR: Before we take questions, Mr.



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Nicklaus, just your thoughts on having Viktor as your champion this year.

JACK NICKLAUS: Oh, we're delighted to see Viktor. You know, Viktor and Denny McCarthy both played very well, particularly coming down the stretch. Viktor just happened to be a little bit stronger there on the playoff hole. Both played well, but we're delighted to see Viktor win. I've watched him quite a bit. Viktor plays well within himself and he's a smart player. This is going to be one of many wins that he's going to have as time goes on, and to have him as our champion at the Memorial tournament we couldn't be happier.

THE MODERATOR: Terrific. Okay. We'll take some questions.

Q. When you make the birdie on 15 and you still have that leaderboard kind of in the back right portion, which I assume you saw, when you approach those closing three holes, are you thinking, I need to pick up a stroke or are you thinking I need to not drop one, in terms of staying patient and playing smart and all that stuff?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I think birdieing 15, that got me to 6-under for the tournament and I saw that I was tied with Scottie. And I thought 6-under could potentially have a chance because those finishing holes are brutal. Obviously, you can make a birdie coming in, but it's just so easy to make a bogey. You can hit a decent shot, but if it catches a bad bounce or you cut it away from the pin and it just bounces firmly, you end up in the bunker and now you've got a brutal up-and-down, and it's just -- you know, I got it done this time around, but usually when -- if it would have been Thursday or Friday, you're just trying to go through there unscathed making par, or even 1-over through that stretch is actually not that bad.

So to come in and, yeah, obviously birdie 17 and go 1-under that stretch was incredible.

Q. I don't think you had worse than a bogey this week. You spoke about sort of playing within yourself and not trying to go for too much. Do you think a couple years ago you might have gone for too much and this



is kind of a tournament just wouldn't have worked out?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I think that's proof of, you know, have I done it here in the past? I haven't played all that great. I've always seemed to play okay, make the cut, but then make a couple of birdies throughout the round, but I would always kind of short-side myself.

Then I didn't have the short game that I have right now, so when you do end up on the down slope and you need to be able to spin the ball or slow the ball down, I just couldn't do that. So it would be kind of a double whammy for me before. I would short-side myself and I didn't have any tools around the green to slow the ball down, and now I can't even keep the chip on the green. So you're just always grinding.

But this week I told myself that when I'm out of position just play for the fatter part of the green and if I miss the green, I still have a shot where I can roll the ball up or slow the ball down enough to get it close to the pin. So I knew this was kind of going to be a competition of not making any double bogeys or making too many mistakes.

Q. If I could ask one more. Like, who or what was most responsible for that maturation that you talked about?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's been great. My instructor, Joseph Mayo, has been awesome to have on the team. We started earlier this year. We've known each other for a long time.

But he's been coming out for a lot of tournaments and just from watching me play golf in agonizing pain, just watching me short-side myself a couple times around, it's like sometimes bad breaks are going to happen. But when you watch it happen too many times or too often, he suggested basically, hey, I think our course management or our strategy is not very good, and that's when he reached out to Edoardo Molinari, who does my stats, and basically they just crunched some numbers and basically saw the stats kind of tell the same story.

So yeah, just a little bit different strategy, and particularly wedges to -- or pitching wedge to 8-irons is where I'm way more conservative, especially at a golf course like this when the greens become very firm and fast and you put the pins on the edges, you just can't afford to go for 'em.

JACK NICKLAUS: Don't look at me. I didn't put 'em there. (Laughing.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I feel like you had something to do with it, Jack.

JACK NICKLAUS: No, no. The TOUR put the pins.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No?

JACK NICKLAUS: I never got involved in one pin placement this week. Not one. (Laughing.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's probably a good thing. (Laughing.)

JACK NICKLAUS: It is a good thing. The scores would have been higher if I did. (Laughing.)

Q. If you could just -- after the shot on 12, the second shot that all of us down here are very familiar with, can you just run us through the mindset to get past that and obviously go on to win.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, over the green there it's quite a severe side slope, and I had a pretty nice lie and I just tried to get a little too cute. It was a very similar shot to that I had on 18 on Saturday where I hit it over the green and you don't really have too much. It's possible to get it close, but you have to absolutely hit it perfect. When it's sitting in that kind of rough sometimes they come out a little bit more dead than you expect it to.

Unfortunately, it happened at that moment. I should have probably just taken my medicine and assured that it landed on the green and I would have given myself maybe a 10-footer up the hill, worst case. Yeah, when you hit shots like that, that's how you make double bogeys around here. Luckily I hit a nice chip shot after that and made an easy 4, at least. Obviously not what you're looking for, but it could have been worse.

Q. (No Microphone.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, that's kind of -- I think it would have bothered me more before. I feel like I have -- not that I'm playing better, I have -- I've relied on my putter this week, and even if I'm out of position, I know that I have a short game, so when I hit bad shots it doesn't bother me as much. Whereas before it was like, okay, I just wasted a shot that I couldn't afford to waste. Yeah, that just kind of changes the mindset a little bit.

Q. You've been playing really well, especially in the majors. Knocking on the door, but just coming up a little close. Is that a fine line between being frustrated in that sense and yet being very confident that you are close? And when you were down four today, what's going through your head there, here we go again or you were freed up a little bit?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, when you're in that spot, it's just hard to win golf tournaments, especially when you're playing fields like this at a golf tournament like -- or a golf course like this. It's just -- you know, you can play great golf and still not win. I think just being in contention as many times as I've been the last few months or the last year, I think that's just a great sign in itself.

Obviously I would have liked to have finished off a few more tournaments. PGA was a great step in the right direction. I didn't really feel like I backed down that Sunday. Brooks went out there and earned it. He played amazing golf. A little disappointing last week in Dallas. That was a bad Sunday. But it's just one of those things, you got to keep learning from it instead of thinking, okay, here we go again and I'm just not going to win this week. You just got to stay within yourself and keep fighting and sometimes it works out like it did this week.

Q. Are you mentally tougher because of it? Does that actually help you in some ways?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know. I think it's -- obviously learning from mistakes is key, but sometimes you get enough scar tissue in there, that's not great either. But I don't feel like I've had that scar tissue. You know, I don't know how to look at it, but I think the more you're in that spot and the more you learn from it instead of beat yourself down when you don't perform the way you want to perform, I think that's just a way better way of handling it instead of thinking, oh, I'm not good in these situations. Just got to keep learning and I feel like I've done a good job of that.

Q. When you saw how difficult this golf course was going to be this week, did you really immediately embrace it? Because it seems like you've really taken to playing difficult golf courses well, and I'm wondering, maybe even, have you always been that way or is that something that's developed more recently?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I would say I've historically kind of done better at easier golf courses because of my aggressive nature of how I play the game and I like to hit right at the pin. So if the ball stops where it lands, I can be very aggressive and just take it at the pins.

In the harder golf courses, you can hit good shots and you're just going to miss some greens. So if I'm missing more greens and I didn't have the short game before, it just puts more pressure on my ball striking, and to a certain point there's only so many greens that you can hit. I feel like maybe this week I hit about 10, 11, 12 greens every single day and didn't hit it bad, by any means, I hit it fine,

but if you don't have a short game to kind of get you through those holes that you were missing greens on, then you just don't have a chance.

But I feel like now with my good ball striking and a short game that I can rely on, I feel like these hard golf courses should suit me a lot better than they have in the past.

Q. What's the mindset when you're chasing somebody who you know is so good with the putter, as Denny is, and just anything you might want to say about him and that playoff.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously, I haven't played with Denny too much, but I know he's notorious for having an incredible short game and that usually lends itself pretty well around places like this. But I wasn't necessarily playing against him. I was kind of playing against the score or playing against the golf course, essentially. I knew that, okay, 6 could potentially get in a playoff, but obviously, I wanted to get ahead of Scottie and I knew I just had to make one birdie and I thought that was going to be the magic number.

Being at 7-under and playing 18, I didn't really want to get too aggressive on 18 and then potentially make a bogey and kind of give it away to Denny. So it was more that I was just playing against the score and just trying to make a par on 18.

Q. I had a couple. For Viktor, which was the tougher putt on 18, regulation or the playoff?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I was shaking more in regulation, that's for sure. The one in the playoff, obviously knowing that Denny's missed his and it's basically a free roll, you know, if I make it, I win, if not, we still got a chance. So that was a little bit easier and it was more kind of up the hill, a little straighter. Whereas the one in regulation, even though it was a couple feet shorter, there was a little bit more break, and I had to hit it so softly. It's not -- you don't really want to ram those in. And, yeah, I'm glad it kind of snuck in on the left edge.

Q. How big is the name Jack Nicklaus in Norway?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Not to break your ego, but I don't think there's too many people that know about you. (Laughing.)

JACK NICKLAUS: I don't think so. (Laughing.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Our season is so short. I mean, way shorter than it is over here. We get a lot of snow. We're a proud ski nation. Most people, in the summer they play

soccer. Yeah, so not a whole lot of golf. But I feel like the last few years it's really ramped up and I feel like more people are getting introduced to the great game of golf and I think that's a great thing.

JACK NICKLAUS: It's a good thing.

Q. Jack, it's been such a good week with -- really with the weather. Is this ideally -- I mean, I know it's great the way Muirfield Village played, but did you always like this about the -- kind of the routing of the course? I mean, today felt like get your birdies through 14, 15 and hang on for dear life toward the end. Do you like that for a finishing stretch in golf?

JACK NICKLAUS: Well, you know, I never thought it was that difficult because, generally speaking, the prevailing wind, it's down your back and from the right on 16, 17 and 18, which means that you can sort of play the ball against the trouble. And you couldn't do that. The wind's coming left-to-right. It was coming a little bit in your face too from the northeast instead of the southwest, and that made those finishing holes very difficult, and of course particularly with the greens as hard and firm as they were.

I don't know that -- the last three holes of this golf course have been historically pretty difficult. 14 and 15 -- well, even 13, have all been looked at as pretty reasonable chances at birdie. So you better store up while you get through there because you got a little bit of a maybe give-back in the last couple of holes.

Viktor finished up 3, 3, 4. Not many guys finish up -- as a matter of fact he was the only guy to birdie 17 today and I don't think anybody birdied 18, if I'm not mistaken. So I don't know why 18. 18 was not a difficult pin position. I mean, that's our standard. We usually have a lot of birdies on 18. But there wasn't any there today, at least that's what I was told.

But you know, I don't really know how to answer your question. I would like to see -- I don't like to see it be brutally difficult. We'll adjust 16 next year. I'll do some things on that that will make it a more forgiving hole. When you've got only 25 percent of the guys hitting the green, which is what it was on Saturday, that's not enough. 12, there was about 50 percent, and that's not too bad. If you play a good shot -- you're going to play some shots into one of the bunkers and you're going to miss that green occasionally.

But 16's a much bigger green. It just doesn't play that big. And, you know, I don't know why 17 played so difficult. You know, it's not a huge green, that's for sure. But I will go through the golf course. 18 doesn't need to be -- 18's

fine. And I might want to fiddle just a little bit with 17. I don't know what it would be. Maybe just coming over that bunker on the right, it might pitch away from you a little bit. I might want to soften that to make the green play a little bit larger.

But, you know, little things. I'm a tinkerer, as you know, and I like to get -- I like to improve things. And we did this whole golf course over two years ago and I'm not going to get it a hundred percent the first time. I'm going to make a couple little mistakes. I think I can do a little bit better and I'm going to try to do a little bit better with it. But I love the way the course played this week. Maybe, maybe a little faster than it probably should have played. I don't think we'll ever find another week like this where -- we haven't had rain here for two and a half weeks. I mean, we don't ever have that. I mean, I walked out on the 18th green tonight and walked out there with Viktor and I said, This is what you guys putted on? I mean, tomorrow that looks like it's going to be, you know, it's going to be gone. I don't think it will be, but it, you know, it was really, really --

VIKTOR HOVLAND: The water might not even stay on the green.

JACK NICKLAUS: No, it will just run off. (Laughing.) It won't go down through it. So, you know, it's hard. I don't want the guys to walk -- they averaged about 75 today in the last round. That's a little high. So we'll -- but we had 17-, 18-, 19-mile-an-hour wind on a hard golf course, on a firm golf course. That makes for tough conditions. I don't care where you are.

Q. Obviously when you played things were a lot different. But Viktor just won 3.6 million dollars. Just wondering if you could speak to how different that is to where your days were (laughing.)

JACK NICKLAUS: My largest tournament win on the Regular Tour was the Masters in 1986. \$144,000. And then I won, my last tournament I won was the Tradition on Senior Tour and that was \$150,000. 3.6 million? You guys are way overpaid. (Laughing.)

No. I think it's great to see what's happening in the game. I have no regrets for it. I love seeing that we were the guys that were the forerunners that helped make that happen. We always had to go win golf tournaments to make a name to go make a living outside. The guys today can make a living on the golf course. And it's not just 10 or 15 guys, you got, I don't know what you got, a couple hundred guys can make a living, or 300 guys, all make a living, don't you. And the tours that you got? I think it's fantastic. I hope next year we pay him 7.2 million. (Laughing.) Maybe the playoffs, maybe he ought to get double. I don't know. But

I'm delighted to see it. I love the purses.

Actually, we're getting right with other sports now. I mean, there's a lot of other sports that are pretty high. And, you know, these guys have worked hard. And, you know, it's not like, it's not like it's a thousand of 'em making that kind of money. It's a select few that really, really work hard and play well.

THE MODERATOR: All right. With that we'll wrap it up. Mr. Nicklaus, thanks for your hospitality this week and being a great host. Viktor, congratulations on the victory. Excellent job. Thanks, everybody.

JACK NICKLAUS: Well done.

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