

WM Phoenix Open

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TPC Scottsdale

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: All right, like to welcome Viktor Hovland here to the media center at the 2026 WM Phoenix Open. Viktor, I know you made a start in Dubai recently, but first start on TOUR this season. I guess get some opening remarks on looking forward to the 2026 season.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, every season kind of lives its own life and it's fun to start a new year and see what it's going to lead to. Excited to get started here.

This is, yeah, an event that is very noisy and there is a lot going on, so definitely a lot of excitement showing up this week.

Q. First start here since 2023. What made this tournament the right one for you to start the season with?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I always -- it's nice to start the year in Hawai'i obviously, but for me, spending the holidays in Norway and not really playing too much golf and flying all the way to Hawai'i where it's really windy and really grainy and you still got to shoot 30-under par to win, it's not the ideal start.

So kind of started in Dubai and getting couple weeks there to hone in on my game a little bit and then come over here I think it was just a perfect fit.

Haven't been here in a few years as you alluded to. Ping is here and I know some people around here, so it's cool to show up and play this event. Haven't played all that great historically here, so I kind of want to come back and redeem some of that.

Q. How is the offseason? Did do you anything, put the sticks away for a little while and try to enjoy something in life?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, I was home for quite a while. Norway this time of year is very, very cold and I'm not the biggest ski person anymore, so just kind of catching up with a bunch of friends and spend time with family.

The time went by pretty quick to be honest.

Q. So you took two years off like you mentioned. What drew you back to the tournament this year and what makes this tournament different than all the other stops on TOUR?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's very unique and it's -- I mean, Ryder Cup is a big deal and gets pretty rowdy, but this is the tournament outside of the Ryder Cup that just feels like compete chaos, and I think it's a cool environment to play in and kind of just embrace the chaos a little bit.

Especially when you pull off a great shot on 16 or something, because you know that if you don't you're going to get booed and it's not going to feel very good.

It's just cool to be in that environment sometimes. I really like the golf course as well, and being in perfect conditions, you know, it's just kind of a nice place to start the year off and see where your game is at.

Q. Is there anything mentally you have to do to kind of change or lock in when it comes to playing in front of this rowdy crowd? Is there something you do differently playing here?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I wouldn't say differently, but maybe you have to just emphasize some of the same things that you do generally when you play tournament golf. For me, I don't like to -- I mean, not that I'm trying to avoid the crowd; you recognize that it's there; but I still have to stay within myself and think about the process and what I'm going to do instead of shifting my focus outwardly towards everyone that's watching.

That can be very distracting at times.

Q. You had a very famous presser a little bit ago where you blatantly said you suck at chipping. You've gotten much better at that. Your stats have improved significantly since then. Moving into a new set of wedges, what's that process like for you, and why can't

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that get lobber get replaced in the bag?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, it's a good question. I think they make phenomenal wedges and the 56 and 50, they just immediately go in the bag as soon as they come out with something new. It's just the 60 I'm still working a little bit with my technique, and that still has to get a little bit better.

I do like in the old Glide 2.0 that the face is a little bit squarer and just how the heel is a little bit smaller, the sole is just a little bit smaller. And it's just a feel thing, because when I try to compare the two it's very similar.

But it's just as I'm working on my technique and trying to get that in a good place, I just don't want to bring another element on top of that.

First would like to get the basic shots down to where I feel comfortable with that, and then I can experiment to see, okay, this wedge is a little bit better, this grind is a little bit better.

First of all the technique has to be down.

Q. Brooks Koepka is back this week. There was the announcement that Patrick Reed has a pathway back to the PGA TOUR as well. What do you think about the PGA TOUR's decision to bring those players back?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, just for my personal standpoint I would say I enjoy playing against those guys. I think obviously Patrick Reed being a major champion and great player and Brooks a five-time major champion, that's a great addition to the PGA TOUR. They're great players and I want to compete against the greatest players out there.

I think it just makes the products, the fields better. However, it does kind of put the TOUR in a tricky position now. You've said one thing for a long time and now we're changing things. What precedent are you setting then to the future players now if I can go to a rival tour, get paid, and now seemingly come back again without the biggest consequences.

I don't really have an opinion on that to be honest. That's something the TOUR has to figure out. I'm sure there is a lot of people not going to be super happy about that, but at the end of the day I just want to compete against the best players in the world.

I'm in a place where I have to figure stuff out in my own game, and that's basically where I'm focusing on. I don't really want to focus on what the TOUR should be doing

right now.

Q. When they announced that, did it make you reconsider any of the decisions that you made for your career, or how did you personally react to it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Not really. I just see the news and I go, oh, that's interesting, and then I just go about my day. I got stuff to do, things to figure out, so that's about the amount of calories I'm spending on reacting to things like that.

Q. Another gear question. You changed drivers after winning last year then went back to the 425 LST. I walked by your bag this morning and I saw two drivers in there again. What's that testing process like with Kenton right now?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I played -- well, generally I tried out the new 440 last year because it is faster. The spin consistency off the face is a joke. If I hit it off the heel or the toe with a 425 the spin discrepancy is very large. Like if I hit it off the toe I can spin it under 2000. If I hit it off the heel I can maybe get up to 3000. Versus the 440, it's very tight. It goes from maybe 2000 to 2600, so a huge gap.

And it's also faster.

However, the problem is it launches a little bit higher for me. And for some reason just with the setup that I've tested with, it tends to go a bit more to the right. Right now with my golf swing when I get stuck, my miss is already a high right misses. If I hit this driver it's just getting exenuated.

Now yesterday, because I was still hitting it so poorly on the course and I texted Kenton if he could just bring a driver that's quarter of an inch shorter and so he brought a different shaft as well. It's in that new 440K version.

Just trying to find something I can put in play, and that seemed to be a lot better. That was just last night, so the experimentation continues.

Q. You're seeing the same spin consistency with the K as the LST?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yes. I would say comparing it to the LST it spins a hair more. Other than that, it's very different because I tried the K from a couple years ago when the 430 came out, and I just couldn't get the spin down at all. Like every single shot spun over 3000 for me.

The new version, it's really nice. It seemed to almost to

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spin less than the max version, which is interesting. It's very good driver.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thanks for the time, Viktor. Best of luck this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yep.

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