

Valspar Championship

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

Innisbrook Resort (Copperhead)

Viktor Hovland

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We would like to welcome the defending champion from 2025, Viktor Hovland to the interview room here at the Valspar Championship. Viktor, final round 67 last year to win by one stroke over Justin Thomas. If you take us back to 2025 and securing your 7th PGA TOUR victory here.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it was really cool. I can't believe it's already been a year. Feels like it's gone by so quick. Yeah, it was a pretty special week, after having shot 80 the last week and really struggled with my game. Kind of finding something at least in my iron game, and just being super patient throughout the week and heavily relying on my putter. I think my putter was really clutch there coming down the stretch particularly. And really just capitalizing on a few good iron shots coming down the stretch.

I remember Justin obviously had a nice little lead there, being three shots ahead when I was on 14 over my 15-footer that broke a lot for birdie. Was able to make that, make another good birdie on 16 and 17, and ended up with a very sweet victory.

THE MODERATOR: You've successfully defended a title before back in Mexico in 2021. What is the key to defending a title?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: (Laughing). I don't know. Obviously Mayakoba, that was a really good golf course for me. It really suited my eye. Especially when I was hitting it as good as I was hitting it. You know, I was able to be aggressive off the tee, hit a lot of drivers, keep it in play, capitalize on my good iron game. And some of my short game woes at that particular place was somewhat negated by the course conditions, type of grass, etcetera. And I was feeling good when I was there. So I think this is another golf course that I really like and should suit my game so just coming back here and feeling comfortable and hopefully I can channel some old good stuff and we'll go from there.

THE MODERATOR: This tournament does have a history

of two-time champs. How special would it be to get another win here this week?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: It would be really cool. As I said, I love this golf course and I think it's a really good test. It's one of those courses, especially with all the ball rollback stuff I think this is a golf course that will, that has stood the test of time and I think it will continue to, just because of the trees, there's some water around there, very narrow fairways, thick rough, small greens. I think it's a great tournament, great golf course, and I would love to win back-to-back.

THE MODERATOR: You had T-13 finishes in your last two starts this season at THE PLAYERS and at Arnold Palmer Invitational. Can you talk about the state of your game heading into this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's nice to see at least some results trending in the right direction. However, I've been still struggling off the tee tremendously. I feel like I'm doing a great job over coming some of those deficiencies. I had a nice practice day yesterday, although it was cut short by the storms that came in. I do feel like it's been a real struggle out there on the golf course, but I've done a really good job scoring. So I feel like my scoring game is in a good spot, I just need to find some shots off the tee, even into the greens, like particularly with my longer clubs. If I can find a certain feel there and have a sense of predictability, I think we'll be in a very good spot.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned playing a little bit yesterday before the storm. Can you talk about your thoughts on the Copperhead course here at Innisbrook and how the design makes it challenging.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think I touched a little bit on it, but it's a very narrow golf course off the tee. You have tree trees on both sides, so it really favors accuracy off the tee. If the wind starts blowing and they tuck the pins on each side, and the greens get very firm, it's very difficult to get close to the pins. So middle of the green is often very good, and, yeah, it's just, it really is a ball-striker's course, but if you short side yourself and you end up missing greens, which everyone is bound to do, you have to rely on



some intricate short game shots around the greens as well. So it really tests every single part of your game.

THE MODERATOR: All right, we'll open it up to questions.

Q. Florida Swing, it's a packed month, a lot of big tournaments, how do you choose which ones to enter and what is it about Valspar that makes you commit to this course. I know you said you love the course, but how does that come into play, how do you make that decision?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, it's tough. I think this is my sixth week out of seven. So definitely a lot of weeks to start the year, I kind of like playing a lot early it start the year and kind of get in a rhythm and we'll go from there. My scheduling traditionally hasn't been very set in stone, I kind of really go by the flow and play the ones that I want to play and if I don't feel like I don't think playing, I won't play. But this is an event that, as I alluded to before, I really like the golf course, I've obviously won here last year and finished third in my debut here. So when I'm playing halfway decent I feel like this is a good spot for me. But obviously with a really tough week at Bay Hill, that golf course is always really difficult, and obviously THE PLAYERS Championship last week is difficult as well. So definitely some mental fatigue kind of slips in there. But it's just one that I don't want to miss, especially when you're defending.

Q. You mentioned you were playing yesterday, did you ever take a Monday off or was that just an unusual situation to play on a Monday?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, I would like to take some Mondays off. I think my trainer would definitely want me to do that. But it's hard for me to take time off and relax when I don't feel like I'm in a state where I feel like I deserve to take one. I feel like there's some things -- I have ideas in my head, always constantly trying to problem solve and see what works and if I have an idea, I want to just go out there and test it and see if it works. If it doesn't, well, okay, how do we move on from there. So ideally, in a perfect world, if I was playing great golf I would probably take yesterday off and just relax. But that's not where we're at, so we're going to have to go out there and practice.

Q. I think last year when you came in here you just started working with Grant Waite, is that right?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Last year.

Q. You just finished with him.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: That's correct.

Q. What's the theory behind changing?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, it's not like I have a theory behind it, but the game of golf is constantly evolving and there's new challenges that arise all the time. I feel like I'm obviously a very curious person and there's a lot of smart people out there. If I feel like there's something missing or -- and I obviously haven't been very happy with the state of my game the last few years -- I'm constantly searching to try to hear other perspectives that might resonate with me a little bit more. It's not to say that -- like I feel like every single person that I work with I've gotten good information, and I don't seek out dump people, I find the smartest people that I deem are out there, and I really listen to 'em and I've learned from a lot of 'em. But I obviously got to filter that information and make that applicable to myself. And there's some information, some bits and pieces kind of resonate with me more than others, and then I kind of, that's how I go about it and try to filter out the information the best that I can.

Q. On Sunday Cameron Young won, and I guess in his press conference he was asked why doesn't he smile much. And he gave a really good profound answer and saying that he was happy, just doesn't show a lot. But you're a guy that smiles all the time. Every time we see you you're smiling. Why is that, and can you explain why you're always constantly smiling no matter the situation?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I'm just actually a deeply unhappy guy (smiling). No, I think we show things differently. Cam obviously showed himself pretty stoically after winning the biggest tournament of his career. So, yeah, I think, yeah, we're all individuals and show it differently. We're out there performing under the highest pressure situations and we're going to deal with that differently. We're going to look a little bit different. But, yeah, it's just, I guess how I'm built and made up and I'm not always so smiley when I am out there making bogeys or double bogeys and stuff, but I guess that kind of comes with the smiliness and in general, I would say.

Q. Do you feel like it relaxes you a little bit, even in difficult situations?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, I do consider myself like a very serious person, and I take things seriously. I like to be focused and have a certain intensity in the things that I'm doing. But at the same time you got to be able to jest with things and not take things too seriously. And I would say that's largely a byproduct of kind of Scandinavian culture. We're a bit more laid back and,

yeah, look at things in maybe a little different light.

Q. Norway's noted for winter sports. So congrats in the Olympics. But why did you pick golf?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Why did I pick golf? Well, my dad worked in the United States and got introduced to the game here. When he came back home, that's kind of how I hit my first few shots when I was three or four years old. But I also did martial arts. I do Taekwondo. Soccer is basically the most popular sport back home. Obviously we do cross country skiing, downhill skiing, so very active as a kid. But when I was basically 11 or 12, moved away from kind of the soccer team, because I would change from elementary school to a different school. And then the team on my soccer team, like all my friends left, basically. Then I found out that if I wanted to continue playing soccer, it would be with a completely different team. And then I noticed I wasn't as interested in playing soccer. I wanted to play golf because it was an individual sport and, yeah, just kind of went from there.

Q. I've always marvelled at your ability to hit the long irons so precisely. What is it about your swing or comfort level with those clubs?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I think -- I really do have to credit the irons that I'm playing. There's a reason why I've stayed with the i210s that I currently have in my bag. I just think they're so forgiving, easy to get up in the air, but still have a lot of control and keep a lot of the spin that I need. But I think largely, if we just put my golf swing into it, for example, I think because of my release pattern, I have a lot of flexion in the lead wrist and I throw it into extension, I'm able to get a lot of loft on the ball while at the same time having a lot of turn and compressing the ball. So I can launch 'em pretty low, but still get the benefit of getting the spin and the consistency of not curving it very much, just because of my release pattern. That's, I think that's where that largely comes from.

Q. You just mentioned your love of soccer and playing it as a kid. I believe Norway qualified for the World Cup for the first time ever. Just your thoughts on that and will you be paying attention and how much will you follow it?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, feels like forever, but it has been a long time I think in the '90s was the last time, '98 or something was the last time we were in the World Cup and beat Brazil. That was kind of a historic game. But unfortunately I'm not the biggest sports fan. Like, I don't really watch anything. But I'm aware that there's some really good Norwegian soccer players out there now, and the national team seems to be trending. That's really cool

to see and I know obviously they will be playing over here. So I think, actually, I talked about it with Kristoffer Reitan, he's a huge soccer fan and he pitched it to me that there's, I think one of the games, it's nearby one of the events we play, so we might actually go and check it out. Or he's going for sure, I'll see if I join him or not. But, no, that sounds pretty enticing because, yeah, it's cool to see Norway finally play.

Q. You've spent some time in the Tampa Bay area now coming to play these tournaments. What do you like about the area, do you have any favorite restaurants, any places you like to go, or do you just pretty much stick to the course while you're here?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Don't remember what the area was called, but I'm a big Greek fan. I eat a lot of Greek --

Q. Sponge Docks in Tarpon Springs?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yes, yeah, correct. So I've spent a lot of time there. I've probably eaten at every single Greek restaurant that's down there. So, yeah, we're going to try to hit that up later this week.

THE MODERATOR: All right, thank you for the time, Viktor. Good luck this week.

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Thank you.

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