

U.S. Amateur Championship

Press Conference
Friday August 17, 2018

Viktor Hovland



Q. We'd like to welcome our first U.S. Amateur semifinalist, Viktor Hovland of Norway with a 7 & 6 victory, second 7 & 6 victory in a row. I would assume that "hot" is probably a good way to describe your condition as a player right now. Do you agree with that?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I mean, yeah, you could say that. I played well the last couple matches, and I think I've only made one bogey. Out here with these conditions, it makes it hard for my opponent.

Q. When you won 7 & 6 yesterday, was there something in your match that clicked that was -- the way you were playing that turned it on?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I hadn't really made many putts before yesterday's match, and I had a putt on No. 1, maybe 15 feet, above the hole, kind of on the right side, and I poured it in, and I made another nice putt on the very next hole for a par to kind of keep it going. Just from there, I just saw the lines, and my speed was really good. I was just making putts, and yeah, just really helped.

Q. You've made it to the semifinals at the U.S. Amateur; where does that stand on your list of accomplishments as a player?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I mean, that's got to be up there. Yeah, I've only won one tournament pretty much ever outside Norway that I would kind of consider a tournament. So yeah, making it to the semifinals in arguably the biggest amateur tournament in the world, I'd say, yeah, it's up there.

Q. Was that one event the college event you won last year?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: The Floridian, yeah.

Q. Talk about your driving; we talked a little bit about how in the summer that it was kind of struggling, you were working on some things. How have you ironed that out, and obviously you're driving it pretty well; what have been some of the key holes that you've been taking advantage of with the driver?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, obviously I struggled a little bit over the summer, so I kind of went from just swinging normal to kind of taking a pause at the top,

and that helped for a little while, and then lately I've just kind of found the center of the club face and just kind of found the shot that I can hit on almost every hole that just goes pretty straight, and it's very predictable. I've really taken advantage of that on No. 4 I'd say. I've been able to drive it up by the green almost, I think, every match --

Q. Have you ever been in the rough on that hole?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, but I was in the greenside bunker twice, yesterday and the match before, but I managed to make two birdies being in that bunker. And today, as well. So that's been a good hole. No. 6 is a -- I've seen a couple of guys hit hybrids or 3-woods, but I've also hit a few really good drives there, which gives me a really close second shot into that green.

Q. I did want to ask you about that pause because you became a bit of a fascination on social media. When did you start doing that? Why did that become kind of like a swing key for you? And when did you kind of abandon it? When did you feel like you were okay?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, so I played like a national team club championships deal, tournament in Norway, which -- I mean, it's a big tournament in Norway, but it wasn't like the biggest on my calendar, and in the practice round, I just kind of -- I had been doing it as a drill to kind of feel a swing thought, and then in the practice round I decided, okay, I'm just going to try this on the course. I hit it pretty good. So I just thought, okay, I might as well just try it in the tournament, and I drove it really straight. So I just ended up doing that in the European Tour the week after, and even though I played very poorly the second round, I still didn't drive it bad. That wasn't really the thing that made me shoot 80. But then a couple days after I still did it, and yeah, I'd say maybe five days or so after that second round I just stopped doing it.

Q. Had you ever done that before in a tournament?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: No, no.

Q. Looks like you defeated a teammate and then a countryman earlier on. The guys who are on the board still, are you familiar with some of their games? Do you know them well?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Not really. I've played with Cole

Hammer once, and that was at the Junior Invitational at Sage Valley. So that was a while ago, and I think he's evolved as a player since then. I'm trying to think of the names on the leaderboard. I haven't played with any of those guys except for Cole Hammer. So it'll be interesting to see.

Q. I'm looking at some of your match play stats. You won all three of your matches at NCAAs, round of 16 at the British Amateur, so on and so on. Do you think golfers are born match play players, or do you have to learn to be one?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: I don't know. I mean, it's the same game, but I feel like I kind of have that just attitude. I just become more comfortable. I'm not sure how, obviously, because I don't read thoughts, but just personally in stroke play, it's easy to think, okay, don't hit it there, don't hit it there, don't hit it there. But then in match play, it's just, okay, if I hit a bad shot, okay, it's just one hole, one loss of hole. You're only playing one guy, you're not playing against the whole field, and I think that just calms me to just play my game and don't be afraid of hitting a bad shot.

Q. I believe you like going out first when you play like NCAA match play. How did you spend 24 hours basically before you had to play this quarterfinal match? Were you antsy at all to get going?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Yeah, I was pretty anxious after the match against Chris yesterday. I was very calm during the match, but then after, once I started reading my phone and all the texts came in, like wow, this is a pretty big deal. So that got my emotions back up.

And I was pretty nervous this morning because you're waking up -- I probably woke up 7:00, and then we're teeing off at 3:00. So what are you going to do in between that time. So you start thinking about it, and then you get more nervous. But I'd say when I hit that first tee shot, I was very calm again, so that was good.

Q. How did you kill those eight hours?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Well, I have a roommate, a friend of mine, and we just talked a bunch of nonsense and -- yeah, time went by.

Q. Tell me a little bit about your history with taekwondo; when did you start doing it, and do you think that you could, for lack of a better word, beat up these other guys on the leaderboard?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: For sure. No, I started in first grade and stopped in seventh grade, so I did it for seven years. But I was really young. I thought I was pretty good at it, but I mean, I haven't done that stuff in a long time. It's buried down there pretty deep. I don't know if I could get it out.

No, I don't know who I could beat up. Will Gordon seems pretty big. I wouldn't want to fight him. (Laughing).

Q. How does the fact that you got your college coach carrying your bag help you?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Oh, he's seen a lot. Just been around a lot of good players, seen a lot of good matches, so he kind of knows the right things to say, and yeah, just makes me more alert for things to come, and it's really helped me out.

Q. I think people who are probably seeing you for the first time on TV have got to think that you're a world beater, and you mentioned that you only had one tournament victory outside of Norway. Why do you think that is, the talent that you clearly possess, you're No. 5 in the world and that maybe you haven't won perhaps as much as you'd like?

VIKTOR HOVLAND: Good question. I'm trying to figure that out myself. I mean, I just -- it's hard to win tournaments. You've got to play either three solid rounds or you've got to have one or two just really, really good rounds. I think I've definitely had the game to win more, but I've made a few bad decisions here and there, mis-clubbed, things like that, and it adds up, and you just start being too far behind. I'd say my putter hasn't been good enough. My ball-striking has been nothing super flashy, but it's just kind of consistent, just fairway, greens, but it's hard to win tournaments when you're not putting well, either. I'd say putting has just been too streaky.

Q. (On his putting.)

VIKTOR HOVLAND: The last couple matches. I'd probably put it up there just because with how the greens are, they're so fast and they're so slopey, so even though I made a bunch of putts now, the last couple of matches, you're not going to make that many putts as you normally are when I'm playing courses in Norway that are super flat, they're slow, and you're just like aiming everything inside the hole and just smacking them. But I'd probably say so, even though I don't have any stats to back that up.