

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW**  
**December 6, 2020**



**VIKTOR HOVLAND (-20)**

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**SHARON SHIN:** I would like to welcome the 2020 champion of the Mayakoba Golf Classic presented by UNIFIN, Viktor Hovland.

Viktor, congratulations again on your second PGA TOUR victory. You move to No. 3 in the FedExCup standings and No. 15 in the world with the win.

Knowing that you needed a birdie on the last, can you talk about your thought process on the 18th tee and how you dealt with that pressure to pull it off?

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I was pretty nervous throughout the day even though I hit a lot of good shots and made some birdies. Got off to a nice start so that was helpful. But after -- after the missed putt on 15 and hit a really bad second shot into 16, however made a nice up-and-down there to kind of keep it alive, you know. Had a decent chance on 17 that I missed. So 18, even though it's -- it was like 10, 11, 12 feet, you know, it was a tough putt and it had a lot of break on it. I was just trying to match the speed with the line, and at that time it ended up going in. So it was just one of those times where it just happened to go in.

**SHARON SHIN:** And this is the site of your first PGA TOUR start where you played as an amateur in 2018. Knowing that, how special is it to have a win here?

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I was lucky enough to get an exemption here in 2018, first PGA TOUR event. Was really nervous, maybe even more nervous than I was making that putt on 18. I missed the cut by a shot there.

The next year I come back, first time as a pro, missed the cut by a shot. So it's nice to come back here the third time and get the win to kind of get some revenge for the first two times.

**SHARON SHIN:** Viktor, congratulations on your win today. We spoke two years ago when you were an amateur here. Does it become more special this place, Mexico, now that you have won this tournament now that before that was your first tournament on the PGA TOUR, now it becomes your second win, does it make Mexico more special for yourself?

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I'd say so 100 percent. It's just a great resort. Even though I missed the cut my first two times, I had a blast being here. The hotels are amazing, the weather's usually amazing, the course is great, the food is awesome, you're on the beach, you're hanging out. It's really one of my favorite spots and to play here for the first time as an amateur on the PGA TOUR and to then win it later, I think that's pretty cool.

**Q. Viktor, just quickly in detail, what was the yardage and club on 18?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** So I'm in meters, so I had 142 meters to the pin if Shay did his job correctly. I hit a little soft 9-iron. Had a little mud on the left side of the ball, so I kind of aimed it in the middle of the green and luckily kind of squirted out to the right a little bit. It ended up getting pretty close to the pin.

**Q. You mentioned the other day that your personality, you like to either not play at all or grind. What did you do during the break to improve your game and propel yourself to victory this week?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I've always kind of been a grinder, I really like to play golf. I would always go to the golf course and practice, but I really started to take my fitness a little bit more seriously, started eating a little better, just kind of learning about the nutritional side to it and just kind of getting a good routine in instead of just, oh, well I don't have to play any tournaments for three months, I'm just not going to do anything.

Luckily, at Oklahoma we didn't close down any golf courses, I was able to practice at Carson, and my roommates and the guys on the Oklahoma State golf team were able to play almost every day. So it was like, you know, COVID wasn't really affecting us that much. I felt like I was able to make some good gains in my golf game during that period.

**Q. Just a follow-up, what to you is eating better? Like what did you -- what did you start eating that you didn't eat before or give up that you used to eat all the time?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I spent a lot of time on YouTube just learning about stuff. I was into some fad diets, just some weird stuff just trying out to see how my body would feel. Figured out that that's not it. Just kind of going through more conventional nutrition. Yeah, just figuring what I need to eat. Start eating more protein, a little less fat, very basic stuff. A little more frequent meals instead of just eating two times a day. Just little stuff.

**Q. First, definitely have to follow up on that. Could you give like an example of a fad diet or two that you ran through in this process?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** So this is actually when I got my first Tour win in Puerto Rico I was doing intermittent fasting and a couple of those tee times that I had, it was probably like 1:00 and I hadn't eaten the whole day, or my early tee times, you know, I teed up at 7:00 and I didn't finish until after 12:00 so I didn't have anything to eat before that.

I just felt like trying that. I don't think that was the way to go for me. That was mainly it.

**Q. Have you been chasing distance with your workouts, with your health stuff, just generally seeing the way the game is going? Is that an emphasis? You're obviously a great driver of the ball, so has distance been like top of mind for you?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, it's been a very big thing that Jeff Smith and I have been

working on a lot the last couple months. Not necessarily so much with the fitness, I do that kind of just for general well being, but I think -- and I have lot of gains to make just practicing swinging hard, dedicate 20 minutes to just hitting it as hard as I can.

Obviously for this golf course you don't have to hit it very hard. I think there's only maybe a couple tee shots here where I try to hit it a little harder than normal. Most of the time I was hitting maybe 75 percent of my drives out here were just kind of chip drives to hit the fairway. It went a little further than my 4-wood would have gone and I feel like I can hit the ball a little straighter even with that chip drive instead of hitting a hard 3-wood.

**Q. And last thing, it looked like on the 18th you said something to your caddie after your tee shot like, "Man, I'm hitting it so bad," or something like that. I was wondering if that is what you said and if you indeed felt like you were hitting it bad en route to your big victory?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I can't quite exactly remember what I said, but I did say something, "that was so bad," speaking about the tee shot. Then making the comment, "Man, I'm hitting just everything off the heel." I think except for one drive on 9 I think that I pulled a little left, every other drive that I hit was on the bottom of the neck. I was just kind of hitting spinny cuts all day, but they go pretty straight.

Not to make a super like pitch to the Ping golf equipment, but the new driver I feel like for some reason when I hit it off the bottom, it goes a lot further than the previous driver. It still went a decent distance even though I mis-hit it on the face.

**Q. Coming into the 18th green when your name was called, although it was a closed door event, a lot of people were cheering when your name was called. How did that feel, especially knowing you had to make that birdie putt?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, it's nice to kind of hear the support from the fans a little bit before you have to make a certain putt, but to be honest, I was very in the moment. I knew I had to make the putt, so I didn't put too much focus on the cheers or how many people were standing out there. I knew I had to make the putt, so that was kind of what was on my mind.

**Q. Both your wins have come in a similar fashion with a birdie putt at the 18th hole. Did any flashbacks of your win in Puerto Rico come to you when you were ready to putt over here?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, when I was standing on the 18th tee I knew I had to make a birdie to win and I told myself, okay, I was able to do it in Puerto Rico, hopefully I can do it today.

You know, it's still hard and I just try to take one shot at a time. And luckily this putt, even though the putt this time wasn't as easy as the one in Puerto Rico, that 10, 12 feet, that's a lot more doable to make. The one in Puerto Rico, you're not really expecting to make a

30-footer really ever, it just happened to go in. It's not like you can just kind of force yourself to make it, it's a lot of things that have to go your way for it to go in the hole.

**Q. Just going back to when you won in Puerto Rico and won here, what is the one part of your game that's better now than it was in February?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** It's hard to say if you just compare the tournament stats for that week compared to this week.

I'd say there's one thing that's different, I'd say I'm hitting it further now. I've got a lot more speed with the driver off the tee even though I didn't necessarily need it at all the different holes out here, but I definitely got some more speed off the tee.

And I would say I'm chipping it a little better. I made a small tweak. I'm going basically everything within 40 or 30 yards I do like a 10-finger grip instead of like I normally do interlock, so I do a 10-finger grip. Just kind of helps with the feeling that I release the clubhead a little bit more, I don't lean the shaft as hard. I'd say that's helped me in a few cases even though my scrambling stats were far from unbelievable this week.

And I would say I just started doing AimPoint a couple months ago. Houston was my first week. Even though I've had way better putting weeks than this week, I'd say I've increased my odds of making the putt because I've actually had a decent idea of where the ball's or where the green is breaking and where the ball is going to go. In the past I've just kind of eyeballed it and frankly, I've not been very good at it. I feel like my stroke is really good, it's very consistent, so if I take the right lines, I should have a pretty good chance of making the putt, but in the past I just haven't.

Yeah, I almost feel like every single part of my game has gotten better since then, which is super exciting.

**Q. One other thing having just said that, was it really hard to sit out at Augusta, I mean, knowing that your game was pretty solid?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah. I didn't think it was going to bother me that much, but it did just watching a little bit. Knowing that I'm in there next year and I had a nice off week, kind of relaxed a little bit, I think it just motivated me a little bit more to just keep working harder and hopefully I have a good chance when I get back there in April next year. It's an awesome tournament and I should have just played a little bit better to get in. It's my own fault, so hopefully we can return there in good fashion.

**Q. Viktor, just a couple quick follow-ups there real quick. I don't want to take too much of your time, but how long have you been with Jeff Smith, how long have you guys worked together, and then what was the read through AimPoint on the winning putt?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** So I've been with Jeff Smith since -- well, I texted him I think right before Boston, so the Playoffs. I just kind of wanted his two cents on my golf swing, just kind of pick his brain a little bit. I was still going through a phase of figuring out who I wanted to work with full time. What he said really resonated with me. Then we spent some more time together and I flew to Vegas or he flew to Stillwater actually and we did some good work together. Yeah, I feel like we've really made some not big changes, but we've made some small improvements that have paid off I feel like.

And on the last putt, it was a little tricky. I felt a 2, so a 2 percent slope, but it was a little downhill. So I knew it was going to break a little bit more than a 2 percent slope, but it wasn't quite a 3. When I put my line out, I'm like, man, that looks a little high, and standing over it I just kind of adapted to it. So I hit it a little softer just because standing over it I felt like, okay, if I hit this a little too hard it's just going to hit on the high side. As soon as I hit it, I was like, oh, man, that didn't break at all, and then the last four feet it just turned hard and ended up going in the middle of the hole. That was pretty sweet.

**Q. If you have spoken with Kristoffer about your win in your native country and Mexico and I don't know if you've spoken with him since?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I saw his brother here just after I finished the 18th hole but I haven't seen Kris just yet. I saw him last night. We talk regularly. He's obviously a good friend of mine, went to the same high school in Norway and went to the same school in college, so we're pretty close.

Almost joke with him a little bit that I'm more Mexican than him right now. But no, I'll be looking forward to catch up with him.

**SHARON SHIN:** All right. Now we'll move to the Norwegian portion of the press conference. Viktor, thank you so much for your time and congratulations again on your win.

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Thank you.