

**ROUND 4 INTERVIEW**  
**December 4, 2022**



**VIKTOR HOVLAND ( -16)**

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**JACK RYAN:** We would like to welcome the champion of the 2022 Hero World Challenge into the interview room, Viktor Hovland.

Viktor, back to back as you've heard a couple times, first player to do that at this tournament since Tiger Woods in 2006 and 2007, and as we talked about in the cart over here, you made it interesting at the end but found a way to pull it out. Just thoughts on the day and winning this tournament back to back.

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I thought I had a very nice start, hitting the ball well and giving myself chances. Scottie just had a phenomenal start and kind of pushed me to keep going. I mean, I think I was 3 under through five holes and I was only leading by one. I was thinking before the day started, if I get off to a nice start, I can really build a good lead. So hats off to him, he played some great golf.

Then kind of middle portion of the round I just kept making pars and kind of put it to him to try to come back. Yeah, it was a little up and down overall today, but glad to finish it out.

**Q. How long was the shot after the drop on 18? How many yards did you have?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I had 109 meters, so about 120.

**Q. What was going through your head at that point?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Not many positive thoughts. It's like when you're standing there with a two-shot lead, it's like that's the last thing you can do. Basically just do anything else but hit it in the water on the second shot.

So as soon as that happened, I was pretty frustrated. But I knew that he didn't have a gimme par, so if I can wedge up there close, I can still make a putt and win the tournament. And if not, he still has to make a par to force me to a playoff. But it was a lot more stressful than it should have been.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I've been starting to do both, which is not good, but yeah, depends on my surroundings, I guess.

**Q. Viktor, two years, last year denied Collin Morikawa from becoming world No. 1 and this year you did the same thing to Scottie Scheffler. You're getting pretty good at**



this.

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I mean, I like this place, but I would like to do it a bit more often.

**Q.** I wanted to ask you about your putting, especially because at the start of the week, you came here, you spoke about putting and how hard you've been working on it. That's one area of the game that you were not happy with. Then this week you just putted the lights out of this golf course, 23 putts yesterday, 24 today. The kind of putts that you made, can you just tell us about that and what you really made happen this week with that putter of yours?

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, it was frustrating the first two days because I did not putt very well. I missed a lot of short putts, but it was very hard to putt in the 30-mile an hour wind. The greens are really fast and they're pretty grainy, so you have to hit those putts very softly and there's so much that can happen with the wind. The last two days it's been still windy but fairly calm and I was just able to rely on my feet a lot more. As soon as you see a couple putts go in, it's just easy to get confidence from that.

The difference from just like feeling you're going to make every putt and the first couple days, it was more like, oh, I could still miss this putt, you know, even if it's two and a half feet just because of the wind. It just makes you feel so uncomfortable. Trying to just switch the mindset a little bit.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I mean, the putt on the last was pretty sweet. The putt on 17 was big as well. I don't know, I didn't make too many long putts. It was just like I made a decent amount of putts from 15 to 20 feet. When I hit a lot of good approach shots in there and you're hoping to make them, I just started making them a lot more over the last two days.

**Q.** Viktor, when you came into the same place five days ago, you were not too sure about your game. You had played well, but not played well enough as you said. What changed in these five days?

**And the second one, you seem to love Hero. You won the Hero Challenge in Abu Dhabi and now two in a row here.**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I think it's just one of those things that's easy in practice to -- I set very high goals for myself and when I don't hit it the way that I want to hit it in practice, I get very frustrated. I feel like I'm just way more out of it than maybe I truly am, because when I haven't been hitting all that great and the tournament starts, all the technique and frustration just kind of goes out the window and you kind of just have to play the game. I just kind of just stayed within myself, I didn't try to hit any shots that I knew I didn't have.

So one example that I was struggling with was that I was spinning the ball a lot and if I hit a



full shot, my face would turn to shut and I would just kind of hit pull draws, which is not good if you're trying to hit pull cuts all day. So what I ended up just basically doing was I just kind of chipped everything. I felt like I was going to have a Tommy Fleetwood kind of finish, if you will, because I know where that's going to go. Frankly, it helped in the left-to-right winds because I can just kind of hit that pull draw up against the wind and it will come back. And on the right-to-left winds, well, I either have to aim it pretty far right or I just have to lean the shaft really hard to make sure that that face doesn't turn over. That's just like how I figured out how to play golf this week.

**Q. (No microphone.)**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I remember joking with Dr. Munjal that that was my first professional win at the Abu Dhabi Hero Challenge. Yeah, I played in the pro-am with him in Dubai earlier this year and obviously won this event two times. I told him I've done well when he's been around.

**Q. Viktor, how would you characterize your 2022 and does this change the way you're going to think about this year?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Definitely feels a little bit better ending up with a win. I think it was a step in the right direction even though I feel like I should have won more tournaments this year. There's a couple that stings or a couple just tournaments that I just didn't play well enough. There were too many weeks where I just kind of had to grind and get through the round instead of showing up and attacking and feel like I was going to shoot 7, 8 under. It was just too many times where it was, OK, if I play well, maybe I can shoot a couple under. That's been a little frustrating. I feel like I still have some work to do there, but this is obviously a huge step in the right direction.

**Q. Viktor, congratulations and well done. Listen, it's been a great start to the European Ryder Cup qualifying process; Shane winning, yourself winning, Jon Rahm winning in Dubai, I think. How important is that going into the new season next year and how delighted do you think Luke Donald would be?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I think it's -- obviously it's a year until the Ryder Cup, but if the whole team keeps playing well and getting a lot of momentum going into the week, I think that's great.

The American players last year certainly had an amazing year and they kind of knew going into the tournament that they were the favorites. So I think we have a chance to kind of push it the other direction. The more Europeans that win, I think we can maybe change that narrative a little bit to next year. Yeah, but it's just, it's cool to see fellow Europeans do well.

**Q. Viktor, you just said a little bit ago it was a lot more stressful than I thought it would be. But you handle stress well. When you get in these situations, it doesn't seem like you're necessarily looking stressful. How do you handle it and what's the**

**mindset?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I've obviously been in this situation a little bit more than when I first came out on Tour, so I think the more you put yourself in that situation, you're going to handle it better.

I think just kind of throughout my childhood, not to -- I've had a very good upbringing, but it's, you know, whether it's getting -- taking the bus to school with a golf bag and my books and gym clothes and it's packed on the bus, I've got to stand there for an hour to school and then back home and then to practice, I think those little things just makes you a little bit tougher.

Growing up in Norway, it's not necessarily great for golf and I think you have to just make do with what you have. I think those things just build character a little bit and makes you handle stress a little better than, you know, if you just had everything on a silver platter.

**Q. Viktor, what do you feel you learned most about yourself in the past 12 months that pleases you?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I don't know, I don't really think like that. I just kind of, I go throughout the day and just think have I had a good day, have I done everything I needed to do today to get to where I want to be tomorrow or next year or five years down the line. I think as long as I do the things that I need to do, I think that makes me go to bed content and I think the results are going to come from that. If they don't, well, then I have to reevaluate and reassess. Just because I haven't gotten better or maybe I've worked on some bad things, I kind of look at it as a learning experience. Yeah, I just try to get a little bit better every day, as cliché as that sounds.

**Q. The new Hero Cup next month obviously schedule wise, it sort of won't affect you, but do you see that being an important part for Europe's preparation for Rome?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, I think so. Not quite the same thing obviously, but growing up in junior golf in Europe, we would always have the European boys team championships and all these match play tournaments where you have to play with a teammate. Then when I came to college I didn't really do that all that much. Especially in pro golf, you don't really play all that team and match play tournaments.

So I think that's just a unique opportunity to just have all the guys play match play and team up. I think it's great.

**Q. Viktor, I know you said you weren't all that happy with your putting, the first two days had a lot to do with wind, but when you look at statistically how much you improved really over the last year, you talked about it earlier in the week, how rewarding is that to get the payout, I guess?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** How rewarding --



**Q. To get the payout.**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, it was a little bit of -- to kind of summarize, when I first came out, I feel like I was -- my ball-striking, the quality of the ball-striking wasn't as good, but I hit it super, super straight and it felt like I could shoot 2 to 3 under every single day without really making putts. That was nice in one way, but as soon as I was a little bit off, I would shoot over par.

Whereas this year it's kind of been a little bit of the opposite where my ball-striking's been off and I've been putting really well just to shoot a couple under par. That's almost more frustrating, but at the same time it kind of takes some pressure off your back where, OK, I don't have to stripe it to shoot under par, I can actually rely on my putting to hang in there.

Over 72 holes you're not going to hit great shots all the time, I hit plenty of terrible shots today, but it's making those key putts and kind of keeping yourself in it. That's been the reason why I've been able to be in contention without really hitting it all that well this year.

**Q. A couple things, Viktor. Which was more fun, coming from six back or doing this?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** I think coming from behind is more fun because you're more attack mode, you're more relaxed. To be honest, this was kind of a stressful week just being in contention from the get-go and even getting -- having a five-shot lead at the turn with nine holes to play. It's five shots, it's hard to mess that up, but you see how close it can get on the final hole. So you just always have to hit the next shot, you can't relax. As soon as you do, boom, that's a bogey. Suddenly Scottie makes a birdie and he's right back there. Yeah, it takes a lot out of you and I'm pretty tired.

**Q. Secondly, I know this felt like a long time ago, but the sixth hole was very interesting in terms of where you put it off the tee, him chipping in and that putt you made was pretty big. I wonder if you can just kind of go through that.**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, hit a terrible tee shot left right behind the bush. I basically just had to lay up with a pitching wedge. I'm way back there, hit an 8-iron from the rough to kind of a nasty short left pin with the wind off the left. So I hit a great shot to just kind of 12, 15 feet right of the hole, did kind of what I was supposed to do, but then Scottie chips in and that changes things.

But I remember just kind of getting a flashback to playing with Rory in the last group at The Open where he made a bunker shot on No. 10 and I still had a putt for birdie from probably 15 feet and I was able to make that putt on top of his eagle to -- I think I still had the lead at that time. It just kind of -- instead of in the moment thinking, man, that was a sick shot, he just made eagle and he's creeping up from behind, but at the same time it's like, OK, this is a putt, I can make this putt, every shot matters, just kind of refocus. Yeah, it's nice when you can kind of make those putts on top.



**Q. Viktor, I saw you practicing AimPoint in putting and do you feel part of this like victory good round with your team? If it's possible to explain to us how do you do, how do you make game plan and everything within your team?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Yeah, so when I first started working with my coach, Jeff Smith, he came to Karsten Creek where I practice and we just went out and played a few holes. He just watched me putt a couple out on the course and I would misread 15-footers by probably two feet, and I would hit good putts. My reading ability was just really, really bad. It was at a golf course I play at every single day I'm home, so I should know the greens.

And he had some experience with AimPoint, so he basically said, OK, you need to really learn this. So the rest of the nine holes he just basically read the greens for me, told me where to aim and I just started making everything.

So that really kind of clicked in my head that, OK, I really need to master this. Obviously it's not a perfect system, I'm not going to make every single putt, but it gives me a framework to where I can trust that read and most of the time it's going to be fairly close. So what I do every single -- what you saw on the practice green, I just kind of get some tees up, hit short putts, get the level out just to make sure that my feet of calibrated, yeah, and then ready to go.

**Q. Viktor, so many of us associate Norway with (indiscernible) and winter sports, I'm sure you're not offended by that. I just wonder, the more you do in this game and the more you win and the higher you go, has it got a reaction towards you back in Norway changed? Have you noticed it's become a bigger deal?**

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** That's a good question. You know, I don't look at social media all that often and I spend most of my time in the United States, so it's hard for me to really see what's going on back home, but I get a bunch of text messages and people seem to be paying close attention.

That's kind of one thing about Norwegians is that we're very patriotic. We only have five, six million people, but it seems like when Magnus Carlsen is winning, everyone tunes in and starts playing chess, or if it's Thor Hushovd in Tour de France, everyone just started biking that summer, or, you know, what Erling Haaland's doing is incredible and obviously with Casper Ruud in tennis. People love their sports and I think they root for their fellow countrymen when they do something well.

**JACK RYAN:** Viktor, congratulations and thank you very much for your time.

**VIKTOR HOVLAND:** Thank you.

