

18-Year-Old ICL Academy Student Iva Jovic Stuns No. 7 Seed Jasmine Paolini at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, January 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- American tennis sensation Iva Jovic delivered the upset of the tournament on Friday, defeating seventh-seeded Jasmine Paolini 6-2, 7-6(3) to advance to the fourth round of the Australian Open. The victory marks the 18-year-old's first win over a top-10 player and her first appearance in the second week of a Grand Slam tournament.

Playing with poise and power beyond her years, Jovic dominated from the baseline against the two-time major finalist, recording 20 return winners in the 106-minute triumph. The No. 29 seed broke through against an opponent who had defeated her twice before, including at last year's US Open.

"I've been wanting this one for a while now," Jovic said after the match. "Had a couple of tough losses. I'm so happy to get through that barrier and get that win today."

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Iva Jovic Wins 3rd Round Match at 2026 Australian Open

Jovic's meteoric rise in professional tennis has been nothing short of extraordinary. Just one year ago, she was ranked No. 191 in the world. Today, she stands at a career-high No. 27 after capturing her first WTA title in Guadalajara last September and reaching finals in Hobart just weeks ago. Her 10-2 record to start 2026 has tennis experts taking notice of the teenager's potential.

What makes Jovic's success even more remarkable is that she's still a high school senior, balancing her professional career with academics as a 12th grader at [ICL Academy](#). The #1 ranked tennis school in the world according to UTR rankings, ICL Academy educates over 500 of

the world's top junior tennis players and has built a comprehensive support system that seamlessly integrates elite tennis training with rigorous academics.

"ICL has definitely done so much on the academic side, being able to get a great education and have amazing teachers and peers," Jovic said. "You never really get this experience in traditional school where you're connected with all the top tennis players that you're friends with and compete with. I love ICL and it's a great platform for me."

In a remarkable twist, Jovic revealed she received tactical advice from 24-time Grand Slam winner and ICL Champion Mentor Novak Djokovic just before the match. The Serbian legend, himself competing in Melbourne, took time to provide tips that proved crucial to Jovic's game plan.

"I spoke to Novak before my match, and he was telling me how I can open the court a little bit better with my forehand, and run my opponents," Jovic explained. "I don't know how he has time to do all the things that he does, but it was very cool of him to reach out and share that advice. If there's anyone you're going to take advice from, it's Djokovic."

The connection runs deep for Jovic, whose father is Serbian. She has regularly visited Serbia throughout her life and considers Djokovic a national hero and personal inspiration. Djokovic has been an ICL Tennis Champion since its inception in 2016.

"It's pretty insane," she said. "You always think about those moments where you're going to meet your idols a little bit, and I think sometimes for certain people it can be a little bit deflating if they are maybe not as nice or as open as you anticipated. I think that happens a lot of times where you kind of see, oh, wow, that's definitely not how it looks like on TV."

"I think he's almost even kinder and even more attentive outside the cameras than what he's portrayed. It was amazing. I mean, he's so intelligent and smart and really wants to help the younger generation. So I'm really grateful to have that advice."

ICL Academy's unique model brings together an unprecedented roster of tennis champions who provide mentorship, strategic insight, and inspiration to the next generation. These legends don't just lend their names—their wisdom and experience are woven into the academic curriculum itself, creating relevant connections between classroom learning and on-court excellence.

The academy's champion mentors include:

Novak Djokovic – Multiple Grand Slam champion and former world No. 1

Monica Seles – Former world No. 1 and Grand Slam winner

Tommy Haas – Former ATP world No. 2 and Olympic medalist

JJ Wolf – Professional ATP player and ICL tennis champion mentor

Mike Bryan – Legendary doubles specialist and former world No. 1

Vasek Pospisil – Professional ATP player and doubles Grand Slam champion

James Blake – Former ATP top-10 player and ICL tennis champion

Grigor Dimitrov – Bulgarian professional, former world No. 3

Michael Mmoh – ATP professional player

Gordon Uehling – Former ATP player and tennis champion mentor

Dominik Hrbaty – Former ATP player and world No. 12

This bench of champions provides ICL students with insights that simply cannot be replicated in traditional tennis academies. For Jovic, having access to this level of expertise—from technical adjustments to mental preparation—has been transformative in her development as a player.

"We're incredibly proud of Iva, not just for this victory, but for showing the world that student-athletes don't have to choose between their education and their dreams," said Kirk Spahn, ICL Founder.

Jovic will face Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva in the fourth round, carrying momentum from her breakthrough victory and the confidence that comes from proving she belongs among the sport's elite. With her combination of powerful groundstrokes, tactical intelligence, and the support of both ICL Academy and tennis legends like Djokovic, the young American appears poised for an extended run in Melbourne and beyond.

As she continues her journey through the Australian Open, Jovic represents not just American tennis but the success of ICL Academy's innovative approach to developing complete student-athletes—champions both on the court and in the classroom.

ICL Academy is the #1 ranked tennis school in the world for boys and girls according to UTR rankings, educating over 500 of the world's top junior tennis players. The academy uniquely integrates elite tennis training with rigorous academics, supported by an unparalleled roster of tennis champion mentors whose expertise is woven into the curriculum.

Joseph Itaya

Epicenter Media

[email us here](#)

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