

A's and Aces: Tennis's Newest Darling Soars into Top 20—While Still in High School

Iva Jovic climbs to career-high No. 20 ranking after historic Australian Open quarterfinal run, all while completing her senior year at ICL Academy

SAN DIEGO, CA, UNITED STATES, February 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- While most high school seniors are worrying about college applications and prom dates, Iva Jovic just became one of the top 20 tennis players in the world.

The 18-year-old American sensation has captured the hearts of tennis fans worldwide with her Australian Open quarterfinal run, climbing seven spots to a career-high ranking of No. 20—an extraordinary achievement made even more remarkable by the fact that she's still taking classes and completing assignments as a senior at [ICL Academy](#), the world's #1 ranked tennis school.

“

ICL has definitely done so much on the academic side, being able to get a great education and have amazing teachers and peers. I love ICL and its a great platform for me.”

Iva Jovic

Jovic has officially arrived as tennis's newest darling, and she's doing it while juggling homework and Grand Slam tennis.

“ICL has definitely done so much on the academic side, being able to get a great education and have amazing teachers and peers. I love ICL and its a great platform for me,” Jovic said earlier in the tournament.

On Tuesday, her fairytale run at Melbourne Park came to

an end when world No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka defeated her 6-3, 6-0 in sweltering conditions at Rod Laver Arena. But the loss doesn't diminish what Jovic accomplished: she reached the quarterfinals without dropping a single set, became the youngest player to do so at the Australian Open since Venus Williams in 1998, and vaulted into the sport's elite Top 20—all



Iva Jovic Waves to Fans at Australian Open

before receiving her high school diploma.

BALANCING TEXTBOOKS AND TOP 20 TENNIS

What makes Jovic's achievement even more extraordinary is the balancing act she's performing. While competing at the highest level of professional tennis, she's simultaneously completing her senior year of high school at ICL Academy—a feat that seems almost impossible in the modern era of specialized, year-round professional sports.

ICL Academy's innovative model has made this dual pursuit possible. The online school integrates rigorous academics with elite tennis training, providing flexibility that traditional schools cannot match. Teachers schedule testing and coursework around students' training, travel, and tournament schedules—crucial for someone now ranked among the world's Top 20 players.

For years, Jovic's path seemed straightforward: secure admission to a prestigious university, excel academically, and have a successful college tennis career. Her parents, Bojan and Jelena—both trained pharmacists who emigrated from Serbia and Croatia respectively—instilled in their daughter the importance of education alongside athletic pursuit.

"For a long time, it was getting into a great school and having a good college career, getting a good education," Jovic reflected during the tournament. "That was the plan, and then things just kind of took a little bit of a turn."

That turn has been meteoric. While her older sister Mia chose the collegiate route, currently playing tennis at UCLA while studying Business Economics, Iva opted to chase her professional dreams while maintaining her commitment to education. The decision has paid dividends beyond anyone's wildest imagination—she's now a Top 20 player in the world before even graduating high school.

The academy boasts an unparalleled roster of tennis champion mentors whose expertise is woven into the curriculum, including all-time men's major champion Novak Djokovic, tennis legends Monica Seles and Tommy Haas, rising stars JJ Wolf and Michael Mmoh, doubles legends Mike and Bob Bryan, ATP tour veteran Grigor Dimitrov, and many other tennis luminaries.

"We couldn't be more proud of Iva," said Kirk Spahn, ICL Academy Founder. "She exemplifies the complete student-athlete – someone who refuses to compromise on academic excellence while pursuing tennis greatness."

And tennis greatness she has found. At 18 years old, still months away from her high school graduation, Iva Jovic is ranked No. 20 in the world.

A CINDERELLA RUN THAT CAPTURED HEARTS

Jovic's performance at the 2026 Australian Open was nothing short of sensational. The 29th seed stormed through the first four rounds without dropping a single set, becoming the youngest player to reach the women's singles quarterfinals at Melbourne Park without dropping a set since Venus Williams in 1998.

Her fourth-round demolition of Yulia Putintseva—a clinical 6-0, 6-1 victory completed in just 53 minutes—was the quickest match of the tournament. The performance showcased everything that makes Jovic special: aggressive baseline power, tactical maturity beyond her years, and an unwavering competitive fire.

The numbers told the story of her dominance. Through four rounds, Jovic dropped only 17 games total, with eight of those coming against world No. 8 Jasmine Paolini in the third round—a match that secured her first career top-10 victory. With 11 match wins in 2026, she led all WTA players in victories this season heading into the quarterfinals.

THE ICL CHAMPION NOVAK CONNECTION

Jovic's rapid improvement hasn't gone unnoticed by tennis royalty. Novak Djokovic, the 24-time Grand Slam champion and ICL Champion who shares Serbian heritage with Jovic through her father, has taken a personal interest in mentoring the teenager throughout the tournament.

"She definitely has all the tools to be a future champion and a future number one," Djokovic said.

The 38-year-old legend didn't just offer advice at the start of the tournament—he stayed in touch throughout Jovic's run, providing ongoing support and tactical tips.

"Yes, he did text me with some more tips throughout the rounds. I don't even know what day it is anymore!" Jovic said with a laugh. "So we've been in communication, and I feel like we've built a little bit of a relationship now, which is amazing, and I wish him all the best for the rest of the tournament."

Jovic referenced advice she attributed to Andre Agassi about Djokovic's playing style, comparing him to "a boxer and the way that he's going in for punches and then faking them out a little bit. I think the way (Djokovic) approaches the match is very impressive."

"Hopefully throughout the year I can keep having more moments with him because it's been amazing," Jovic added.

FROM 191 TO HISTORY

The contrast between Jovic's Australian Open experiences is stark and inspiring. Just one year

ago, she arrived in Melbourne ranked world No. 191 and was defeated in the first round by eventual finalist Elena Rybakina. The loss could have been devastating; instead, it became fuel.

After months reassessing and rebuilding her game, Jovic won her first career WTA singles title in September at Guadalajara, propelling her 36 places up the rankings at just 17 years old. She entered 2026 having reached the semifinals in Auckland and the final in Hobart, arriving in Melbourne with momentum and confidence.

Now ranked No. 27 in the world, Jovic is writing a redemption story for the ages—one that includes historic milestones. She's the youngest player since Maria Sharapova in 2005 to reach the quarterfinals at all her first three WTA level tournaments in a single calendar year.

TENNIS' NEWEST DARLING HAS ARRIVED

Jovic's performance at the 2026 Australian Open has made her tennis's newest darling—a teenage sensation who combines power, poise, and the perspective that comes from balancing life as a student and a world-class athlete. Tennis experts and former pros are comparing her trajectory to past prodigies who became Grand Slam champions.

Annabel Croft, former British tennis star, captured the excitement surrounding Jovic's run: "She's almost suffocating opponents when she's out there, and there must be a fear factor because no one wants to lose to an 18-year-old. She's really taking the bull by the horns."

The tennis world has fallen in love with Jovic's story: the high school senior who cracked the Top 20, the daughter of immigrant pharmacists who believed in education and excellence, the young American who plays fearless tennis on the sport's biggest stages while still attending online classes between matches.

This combination—the A's and the aces, the brains and the brawn, the maturity and the fearlessness, the textbooks and the Top 20—is what makes Iva Jovic the sport's most compelling new star. Her quarterfinal run at the Australian Open, achieved while completing homework assignments and preparing for final exams, represents something rare in modern professional sports: an athlete who refuses to choose between academic and athletic excellence.

Many more tournaments await. Many more victories do too. And when Iva Jovic walks across the stage to receive her high school diploma later this year, she'll do so as one of the top tennis players on the planet.

Not a bad way to finish senior year.

Joseph Itaya
Epicenter Media
contact@epicenter.media

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/889131152>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.