

Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. – October 6, 2024 – Iva Jovic simply knows how to win – especially when she’s playing in San Diego. For the third time this year, the 16-year-old Jovic from Torrance won a significant title just down south via the 405/5 Interstate from where she grew up on Sunday capturing the ITF World Tour W75 Rancho Santa Fe Open.

“San Diego has been good to me this year,” said Jovic, after she beat her LA County South Bay neighbor and friend Ena Shibahara, 6-3, 6-3, to win the biggest title of her career at the Rancho Santa Fe Tennis Club. “I guess it’s the homecourt advantage.”

It was the 10th win in a row for the unseeded Jovic coming off her second career pro title at the W35 Berkeley event last week. The victory also avenged Jovic’s previous loss to Shibahara, who represents Japan, as she fell in three sets to her in the Spring, Texas, W35 final in March.

Jovic, one of the top junior players in the world, in March won a large ITF J300 junior tournament at the Barnes Tennis Center, in between her Australian Open and Wimbledon junior doubles titles. Jovic returned to Barnes in August to win the USTA Billie Jean King 18s Nationals and a wild card into the US Open main draw.

“I think the finals are just seeing how tough you are,” said her USTA National coach Tom Gutteridge after the match. “It’s been a long two weeks for her so naturally I’m sure she was a little bit tired. It just goes to show how much she has improved herself physically so we’re just really pretty happy.”

Still an amateur who has yet to declare her professional status, Jovic earned \$7,344 for expenses and 75 ranking points with the win in the USTA Pro Circuit \$60,000 event while Shibahara takes home \$3,882, but more importantly 49 valuable ranking points as she continues her climb up the rankings. At the start of the year, the former UCLA All-American Shibahara decided to devote herself totally to singles saying it’s “now or never” after earning a world top 4 ranking in doubles, as well as a French Open mixed doubles title during her career.

“Yeah, it’s been a process and a journey [this year] and I’m really happy that I went after my dream,” Shibahara said. “It didn’t go my way today but there’s always lessons to be learned.”

On Tuesday, Shibahara said she will leave for Japan for the WTA 250 in Osaka and a WTA 500 in Tokyo. She said she set a goal at the start of the year of reaching the world top 200 and achieved that after qualifying and winning a round at the US Open. “Now this week I’ll be in the top 150 so I’m just really happy and going to keep it going.”

In the doubles final, the Russian duo and No. 2-seeded Maria Kononova and Maria Kozyreva took out No. 3 team of Haley Giavara and Rasheeda McAdoo, 6-2, 7-6 (4). In each of the six matches leading up to the final, both teams split sets against the opposition with each finalist team winning three matches in super tiebreakers until the final.

All four of the doubles finalists played college tennis with Kononova starring at the University of North Texas and Kozyreva at St. Mary’s College in Northern California. Giavara is a former Cal-Berkeley No. 1 and grew up in San Diego and attended Serra High while McAdoo played at Georgia Tech.