



"Appassionate rivalry": colorful hockey

Jacob Tierney's series tells a torrid love story between two professional hockey players.

Posted at 0h00

5 min.



Photo: Crave Connor Storrie plays the character of Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams that of Shane Hollander, in the series *Passionate Rivalry*, directed by Jacob Tierney

AMÉLIE REVERT
Collaborator

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"It's a very romantic story, with very funny and very intelligent writing," Jacob Tierney thinks when he looks at Rachel Reid's series of successful books during the pandemic. The passion between Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, characters from the second novel, "Heated Rivalry", will soon become his new project. He will make a series to follow, over about ten years, the evolution of the relationship between these two professional hockey players that everything seems to oppose. "It's really the story of two men who discover that they are in love, because they don't know it instantly," he warns during a telephone interview with *Le Devoir*. His goal: to take this relationship very seriously and, above all, take his time to tell it. "I think we tend to go too fast with romances. In general, we will do this in a 90-100-minute film," he says. What it offers: six one-hour fiery episodes.

"When I started thinking about the adaptation, I took the opportunity to show something completely happy and completely in love, which is very, very faithful to the book," adds Jacob Tierney. In fact, *Passionate Rivalry* will certainly delight *Game Changers* fans as well as those who will discover this incandescent story on screen for the first time. "I don't want to reveal too much, but, even if I took liberties, I didn't want to change much," he says. A homosexual romance in the world of professional hockey, in itself, is necessarily out of tune.



Photo: Crave 'Assionate Rivalry', by Jacob Tierney, "it's a story that has its heart in Montreal", according to the director.

For the love of hockey

It is therefore as a hockey enthusiast and supporter of the Habs that Jacob Tierney immersed himself in the creation, writing and production of the series. "I spent a decade in the world of *Letterkenny* and *Shoresy, the hockey bastard*, so hockey is something I understand. I think I had practiced enough to know how to tell the story with the movement [on the ice], which is difficult, honestly," he explains. The filmmaker also wanted Montreal, his hometown, to be the cornerstone of *Passionate Rivalry*. "It's a story that has its heart in Montreal, like me. Shane lives there. He plays for the Montreal team, the Metros. Montreal is still there. This is the basis of the story," he says.

When we know that *coming outs* remain quite exceptional in the National Hockey League - Albert's Luke Prokop is so far the only one to have done so, in 2021, after being drafted by the Nashville Predators, and he is currently playing with the Bakersfield Condors in the American Hockey League - can we think that the homosexual relationship between Shane and Ilya would be a small provocation? Not really. For Jacob Tierney, *Passionate Rivalry* is above all a fiction full of fantasy. "The fact that there are not really openly gay hockey players, while there are in other professional sports, is a coincidence. It's not good to have that in mind too much, because these are things that can paralyze creation," he assures. The main thing for the filmmaker was to do what he liked first. The public can think what they want.



Photo: Crave The characters of Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander in the series 'Appassionate Rivalry'

Make young queers smile

Passionate rivalry exists to "make young queers smile," says Jacob Tierney. To show, also, that romances between LGBTQ+ people can end well. "I grew up with stories, especially gay men, but also lesbians and many sexually different people, who didn't have a *happy ending*. There was AIDS, disappointed wives and husbands, shame," recalls the filmmaker. So there is nothing like that in his series. "It's really just a love story," he says. And to increase the price: "And with a lot of sex, because Shane and Ilya are very sexual with each other. "Torrid.



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In fact, Jacob Tierney salutes the performances of his young actors Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie, who play the roles of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov respectively. "They are so good together. Their chemistry is extraordinary. They really wanted to tell this story and were committed to doing so even if it is making themselves very vulnerable than being [often] completely naked [in front of the camera]," he reports. Having so many sex scenes to shoot is indeed not obvious to anyone, admits the filmmaker.

The carnal pleasures are mixed with strong emotions in the series. "Shane and Ilya can't stop thinking about each other. In fact, they are *high school sweethearts*," finally confides Jacob Tierney. Maybe there would even be a little something conservative in this cheerful relationship, he believes. "They are young people who meet when they are 18 and say to themselves: 'Oh my, that's someone for me.' They can't let go. "We couldn't do more traditionally romantic.

PASSIONATE RIVALRY
Crave, from November 28

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KEYWORDS hockey, Montreal Canadiens, homosexuality, television series, National Hockey League (NHL), LGBTQ+ community, queer, Crave, cultural magazine

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