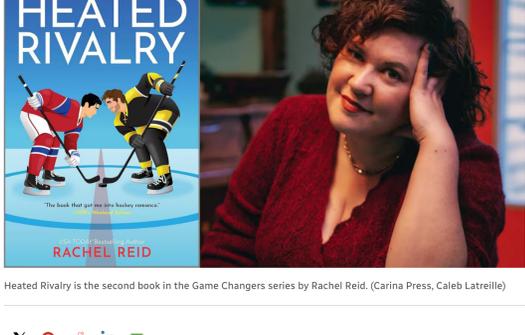


Nova Scotia author Rachel Reid shares how to cure your Heated Rivalry hangover

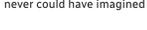
She joined The Next Chapter to talk about the Crave television adaptation of her novel

Talia Kliot - CBC Books - Posted: Dec 26, 2025 4:00 AM EST | Last Updated: December 27

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Heated Rivalry is the second book in the Game Changers series by Rachel Reid. (Carina Press, Caleb Latreille)



When Nova Scotia author Rachel Reid published her Game Changers hockey romance series, she never could have imagined it would be optioned for television.

"When you write the kind of books that I do, you don't really expect anyone to even think about adapting them," she told Antonio Michael Downing on The Next Chapter.

"It's not the sort of thing that gets adapted and it's certainly not the sort of thing that gets adapted faithfully."

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That all changed five years after the first book of the series came out, when she got an Instagram DM from Montreal director Jacob Tierney, best known for Letterkenny. In the message, he let her know that he's a fan of her writing and asked if she'd be open to having her books optioned for the screen.

"I said I'd be very open to that, especially with him," said Reid. "We had a great talk the next day, and he laid out an amazing idea for the show, which is exactly what people are seeing now."

The Crave television show Heated Rivalry, based on the second novel in the series, has been a smash hit.

In fact, Crave said the show's debut was the most successful of all Crave Original Series to date.



A screenshot from Heated Rivalry, a TV series based on Halifax author Rachel Reid's novel of the same name, which follows the love affair between two professional hockey players. (Bell Media)

Starring B.C.'s own Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander and American Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov, it's an adaptation of Reid's book about what happens when hockey's best rivalry has a different kind of heat off the ice.

Shane, representing team Canada and captain of the Montreal team, is serious and no-nonsense, while Ilya, representing Russia and captain of the Boston team, is cocky and talented.

They're both at the top of their game, but their secret romance, once casual, is starting to feel like something more.

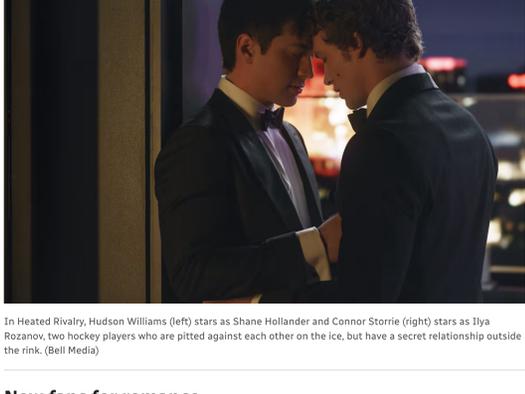
With the pressures of the public eye and the league, in a sport where there's no gay male representation in the professional ranks, the two feel like they must choose between their love of the game and love of each other.

No spoilers — but because it's part of the romance genre, we can expect that things work out in the end, bringing queer joy to our screens in a trying time.

- Q WITH TOM POWER Heated Rivalry is a 'joyfully smutty' gay hockey romance — but it's also about love

"Things are very, very difficult for a lot of people — and certainly for queer people right now — and having a show this hopeful and sweet, I'm just very happy it's happening right now," said Reid.

"I think it's good timing for it and the response to it has been really uplifting for me. Just to see this many people being excited about this story all over the world has been wonderful."



In Heated Rivalry, Hudson Williams (left) stars as Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie (right) stars as Ilya Rozanov, two hockey players who are pitted against each other on the ice, but have a secret relationship outside the rink. (Bell Media)

New fans for romance

The mainstream success of the show has prompted many fans to seek out Reid's novels, so much so that major retailers sold out of physical copies.

"I'm definitely getting a lot of new readers from this, which is awesome," she said.

It's also bringing new people to the world of romance stories.

"I've seen a lot of people who don't really have any familiarity with romance who are checking it out, like people that wouldn't normally watch a show that's a romance."

- Two NHL players openly falling in love? In real life, that's a fantasy. Not in this series

Reid says she was pleasantly surprised by the reception of the show by the hockey community.

"I kind of expected this show to be largely dismissed or maybe made into a punchline by a lot of the hockey world, but it seems like it's being embraced," she said.

An ad for the series was even played at a Montreal Canadiens home game celebrating Pride Night on Dec. 9 and at other home games this month.

LISTEN | Rachel Reid on The Next Chapter:

Filling the Heated Rivalry void

The season finale dropped on Dec. 26, and if you're feeling the Heated Rivalry hangover, Reid's Game Changer series has five other books, including The Long Game, which is the continuation of Heated Rivalry and the basis for season-two storylines.



Crash Test is a novel by Amy James. (Avon/HarperCollins)

And if you still want more, she recommended two more books to fill the hockey-player sized hole in your heart.

The first is another sports romance, Crash Test, written by a fellow Nova Scotia author, Amy James.

"It's a very emotional romance between two men who are both F1 racers," she said. "So that's kind of a little rarer than a hockey romance, but yeah, it's a good one."

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For her next pick, she goes back into the hockey world, with Hockey Bols by A.L. Heard. "That might be my favourite one, honestly," she said.

"It's about beer league hockey and two men who are on the same beer league team, who fall in love. I think it's really sweet and kind of very different because it's not professional hockey."

As for Reid's future plans, the hockey romance world is where she'll be. She's got another book in the works and Heated Rivalry season two is on the horizon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Talia Kliot

Talia Kliot is a multimedia journalist currently working at CBC Books. She was a 2023 Joan Donaldson Scholar. You can reach her at talia.kliot@cbc.ca.

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