‘Heated Rivalry’ Stars On Why Sex Scenes Are Easier To Film Than Hockey, Fan Speculation On Sexuality: “Just The Nature Of Celebrity”

By Glenn Garner
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Storrie echoed his co-star's sentiment, noting, "The hockey stuff is not easy. I mean, it's hard to believe yourself as an NHL player at the top of your craft. ... It's very physically demanding. It's also, being on the ice for so long is almost nauseating. I don't know, just the lights, it's cold. It's so not easy."

Fortunately for the show's devoted fans, this week's episode 'Rose' features multiple intimate moments between Ilya and Shane. Meanwhile, the stars are aware of the fan speculation that's grown around their own sexual orientations, which Williams notes is "just the nature of celebrity."

'Heated Rivalry's' Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams
GLENN GARNER/DEADLINE

Williams said, "I think there's never a question for me, when I would dream of becoming in the public eye, that I would want just a level of privacy. But of course, I agree. I want queer people telling queer stories, but also, there's the element of Connor and I—we're best friends, and we love expressing that physically."

For Storrie, with "so much energy coming at us," he explained, "It's important for me to have a little bit of separation from the character in the show."

Based on Rachel Reid's *Game Changers* novels, the Jacob Tierney-created series follows the affair between Ilya and Shane as they begin to fall in love over several years, sneaking away to see each other when their teams are playing.

Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov and Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander in 'Heated Rivalry'
SABRINA LANTOS

The episode 'Rose', now available to stream, sees Ilya and Shane trading in their usual discreet hotel rendezvous for Ilya's mansion. Despite the casual nature of their dynamic, the pair sticks around after their latest hookup for some cuddling and tuna melts. But when things start getting a little too real for Shane, he bolts, only to spark romance with famous actress Rose Landry (Sophie Nélisse).

Read on about the latest episode of *Heated Rivalry*.

DEADLINE: ***I know everybody on social media is loving Heated Rivalry, and I also saw that you guys went to Hi Tops last night. What was it like seeing the fan reaction in person?***

CONNOR STORRIE: It's so overwhelming. We did some fan events before the show came out, and that felt a little easier because it wasn't so much about us. It was more about the story, but that was so weird to be around people, because it became not just about, "I love this story, I love these characters," but like, "I love you on the show," and it's like, oh, I can't accept that.

HUDSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I almost just wish they didn't give us mics and they just sent us into the crowd, because I can do person-to-person, but when they're like, "say something," and it's like "What do you want me to say in front of everyone? Everyone's looking at you and filming you, but it's still grea. After the mics went down, we just got to meet these people, taking selfies, and they're just saying how much it means to them. That is really special.

Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov in 'Heated Rivalry'
SABRINA LANTOS

DEADLINE: ***And obviously, the sex scenes have been incredibly popular. But I have to wonder what is more physically demanding, the intimate scenes or the hockey scenes? Which would you rather spend the day filming?***

WILLIAMS: I'd rather do the sex scenes because the hockey scenes—my feet hurt and then I cramp and I'm not that good, so I have to be very diligent with making sure I don't look like a phony. But with the sex scenes, we rehearse them so heavily and we knew what we were gonna do going in, that they're also a lot of fun.

STORRIE: Yeah, it's a dance. I totally agree with that. The hockey stuff is not easy. I mean, it's hard to believe yourself as an NHL player at the top of your craft. I mean, those people, they work their entire lives for that. So, getting in those skates, being next to these guys who have been doing this for like 20 years, you're like, "I'm OK." It's very physically demanding. It's also, being on the ice for so long is almost nauseating. I don't know, just the lights, it's cold. It's so not easy.

DEADLINE: ***I loved this episode because we've seen Shane just really putting his heart on his sleeve, but now we're starting to see Ilya kind of give in a little bit. But then on top of that, we're seeing Shane pull away. Tell me about tug of war and how you guys brought that to the screen.***

STORRIE: For me, it's always just moment to moment. I don't really think of things in like arcs or plot or, "Oh this is so different from what we've done before." I think we just kind of know these characters really well, and then it's easy to kind of take that base and plug and play it. I always look at Ilya as his own thing, and then I think if I'm really solid on that, then it naturally will provide whatever needs to be happening in the plot of the story. And then we have someone like Jacob who knows the story like the back of his hand and is willing to be like, "No, I think at this point, we need a little more of this, we need a little less that." So, it's just really knowing the person, and then you can plug that into any element of the story.

Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander in 'Heated Rivalry'
SABRINA LANTOS

WILLIAMS: Yes. To that point, knowing Shane, it felt like, of course he's running. This is almost like when you go to pick up something you think is heavy and then it goes light, it's almost like that moment where it's like, "Oh my God." He is like it, it looks like boyfriends. It looks like a partner, and it hasn't up to this point. And that's sort of terrifying. And [calling him by] the first name, it's a lot of things that are just sort of scaring him in that moment, that it's hard just to take that.

STORRIE: Right. There's so many new things that you can't help but feel altered or different.

DEADLINE: ***I also love the addition of Rose in this episode. What was it like bringing her into the fold? Because it's kind of giving Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift.***

WILLIAMS: Right. I'm not too familiar with them, so I can't speak to that. But working with Sophie, it was fantastic, and the Rose character is also very interesting because, obviously Shane is in love with Ilya, but Rose, her character in a way adds pressure to who he's meant to be or what he thinks he should look like. But then again, she's a confident and she's someone who's open and accepting and makes him feel really safe. And up to that point, it was really only Ilya who could provide that, and his emotions weren't always handled with care, so it's a super interesting connection.

STORRIE: Yes, another true connection.

DEADLINE: ***And just being able to step out in public and have paparazzi take pictures of them—***

WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think that's the sort of tragic element for Shane is, because he's able to do this with someone who he doesn't feel truthful that this person he's in love with in that same way, but it's being celebrated in a way that he feels they never would be.

DEADLINE: ***GLAAD recently released a report that nearly half of LGBTQ characters are disappearing from television this year. What does it feel like to be part of a show that's just so unapologetically queer and a lot of people are seeing themselves represented?***

STORRIE: Yeah, it feels great. I think that this community that it really speaks to, is so culturally impactful, now more than ever, and I think that this is really showing people just how much this does resonate with the world, in and outside of that community. I just want people to know that we're so enthusiastic about these people and we relate to them so much, and we love this form of love.

WILLIAMS: And we love this story.

DEADLINE: ***And I feel like anytime there's a big queer project like this, it seems inevitable that people are going to be speculating about your sexuality.***

WILLIAMS: Of course, it's just the nature of celebrity as well too.

DEADLINE: ***Or just accusing you of gay baiting. How does it feel having to separate your personal from the professional?***

WILLIAMS: I think there's never a question for me, when I would dream of becoming in the public eye, that I would want just a level of privacy. But of course, I agree. I want queer people telling queer stories, but also, there's the element of Connor and I—we're best friends, and we love expressing that physically. You see people who infer or assume, and you kind of have to let that go. But then again, I never wanna stop expressing the love I have for Connor physically, and I'm never really going to, and I think multiple things can be true at once. We want queer people telling queer stories. There's an element of, also you can't ask that in an audition room. But I think what Jacob said really sums it up the best, which is, you have to gauge how enthusiastic they are about the story. And they could have paid me $10 and just fed me, and I'm doing the story. I really thought I was gonna get nothing for this, and I just loved the story so much, and I want to be a part of that. And Connor as well, I'm sure feels the same. So, I think that's the only thing you can gauge.

STORRIE: Totally. I think there's so much energy that is coming at us with the rise of this show, and for me, at least, I think it's important for me to have a little bit of separation from the character in the show. All I can really say is that I love Ilya, I love the community that this is a part of and that this caters to. I think that's so much more interesting and valuable than doing just another run-of-the-mill, straight story. Who I date, who I sleep with, who this, that, whatever, I'm gonna keep that to myself. But regardless, I think this is super important, and I think also on top of that, it's just really cool.

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William Huggins on December 15, 2025 10:27 am REPLY

God bless both you wonderful guys! Straight or gay you are both tremendous humans!

David on December 12, 2025 6:36 am REPLY

The significance of having an unapologetic, realistic gay romance is so necessary for young and older LGBT+ people to feel seen and know they are not alone. The loneliness of being queer and not seeing yourself or stories that represent is so isolating. Bravo to the author, actors, and producers for the vital role they are playing.

Tim on December 12, 2025 9:53 am REPLY

Well said.

Tim on December 12, 2025 5:17 am REPLY

I continue to be in awe of how well this series is constructed and how powerful the acting is.

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acting is.

And good for them for wanting to keep a part of themselves undisclosed. They are so emotionally and physically vulnerable on the show, so they should have something for themselves if they want to. I never want to see what happened to Kit Connor happen to anyone else ever again, so I hope people understand and give them the grace that they deserve to divulge things about themselves in their own time if they decide to do so. We know they are supportive of the community, and that's what ultimately matters.

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