

CULTURE

Heated Rivalry creator and stars dissect the intimate moments in the season 1 finale

WORDS BY JORDAN ROBLEDO

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Heated Rivalry creator Jacob Tierney and the show's stars, Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams, have broken down the critically acclaimed finale.

Since November, the gay hockey romance series has captured the undivided attention of the gays, girls and theys worldwide.

Based on Rachel Reid's hit novel, *Heated Rivalry* follows Shane Hollander (Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Storrie), two elite professional hockey players who have a fierce rivalry on the ice but harbour a secret romantic relationship behind closed doors.

The official synopsis reads: "What begins as a secret fling between confused teenagers at 17 evolves into a years-long journey of love, denial and self-discovery. Over the next eight years, as they chase glory on the ice, they struggle to navigate their feelings off it.

"Torn between the sport they live for and the love they can't ignore, Shane and Ilya must decide if there's room in their fiercely competitive world for something as fragile – and powerful – as real love."

On 26 December, fans worldwide were finally treated to the season one finale of *Heated Rivalry*.



Titled 'The Cottage,' the episode follows Shane (Williams) and Ilya (Connor Storrie) as they travel to the former's cottage for some much-needed R&R.

As you can imagine, the episode featured an array of heartwarming and emotional moments between our favourite fictional hockey players.

From Ilya opening up about his late mother to Shane revealing their romantic relationship to his parents, the finale kept viewers (including us) in their feelings from start to finish.

In a recent interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, the show's creator, Jacob Tierney, and stars Storrie and Williams dished about the heartwarming finale and how it marked a change of pace from the first five episodes.

"This was what I was always building to. The thing that I became aware of at a certain point was that the contrast between how huge episode five feels and is, and how small and intimate episode six is, was a pretty big swing, but the swing that had to be taken," Tierney explained.



"That's the way that this story ends, or certainly the way I wanted to end it."

Storrie also reflected on the finale's tonal shift that further explored Shane and Ilya's deep connection beyond their intense sex life.

"It's so cool to crescendo into something that's really different from that. Something I think a lot of people don't realise is just how much of the story takes place with them apart," the 25-year-old talent said.

"That puts this interesting pressure when they are together in the first five episodes, and that created this lack of catharsis, this lack of true expression of what's going on inside sometimes. So I was really excited going into six to have that catharsis, these very direct confessions of love that aren't hidden by a language barrier or being on the other side of the world."

Williams echoed similar sentiments, describing the final episode of season one as a "joy on the horizon."

"It did feel like the end of a journey, which was really nice. But all the episodes prior, you could shove coal up Shane's ass, and you'd get a diamond. He's just so coiled and tight," he cheekily added.

Elsewhere in the interview, the trio reflected on Shane and Ilya's emotional couch conversation, specifically when the characters touch their toes and feet together while discussing the future.

"First of all, I don't remember the toe thing. So seeing that, I even got a moment of, 'Whoa! What? Second of all, Hudson's insane in that scene. He made Jacob cry in that scene like twice," Storrie told the news outlet.

Tierney went on to praise Williams for bringing out Shane's vulnerability, whom he described as a "tricky character."

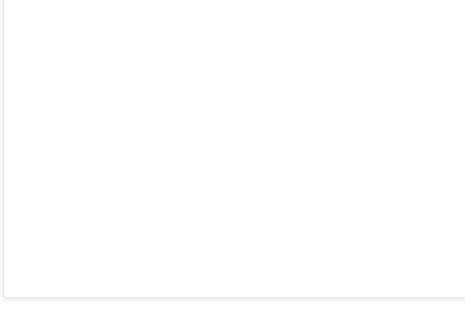
"We said this a lot: He's very internal. This thing that he could do, which is so incredibly revealing emotionally, while still playing someone who I don't think thinks they're being revealing emotionally," he added.

As for Williams, the Canadian actor acknowledged being "very mindful" of his toe-touching during the scene.

"When I'm angry, the last thing I wanna touch is a toe, a hand. So I remember being very dialled in, I didn't even know if things would play out in the wide. So I was very cognizant of 'Angry, toes apart.' It wasn't as deliberate as that, but I was very mindful," he explained.

Fortunately, we'll have plenty more Shane and Ilya content to consume in the future, with *Heated Rivalry* already being greenlit for a second season.

Stay tuned for more updates. Check out the rest of Tierney, Storrie and Williams' interview [here](#).



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