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Heated Rivalry: HBO Max's New Queer Hockey Drama Has The Internet Talking

Heated Rivalry, a sports drama featuring two hockey rivals with a queer storyline, currently airing on HBO Max, has excited viewers all over the globe! Read on for more.

By Sania Sinnak | December 1, 2025, 01:15 PM IST

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Photo credit to Erin Lance/ Hunter Kaczmarek, Credit: Prime Video

Based on the Game Changers series written by Rachel Reid, Heated Rivalry is a newly released queer sports drama on HBO Max (and Crave) that has attracted the attention of netizens, and how. Premiered on November 20, 2025, the series follows two top stars of Major League Hockey, Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie), who are drawn to each other but struggle to cope with the consequences of this attraction in a fiercely masculine sport.

Heated Rivalry: Storyline, Characters, & Cast

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Just two episodes of the HBO series have been released, but X (formerly known as Twitter) is abloze with fans commenting on how intense yet romantic Heated Rivalry is, some even comparing it to the Red, White & Royal Blue movie.

The Plot So Far

Note: This section contains spoilers for the first two episodes of Heated Rivalry, including potential spoilers based on the book.

Hollander and Rozanov are rivals on the rink, placed in opposite teams, but are attracted to each other off it. The first episode ("Rookies") shows how their first interactions were charged with something other than just envy or respect, and how this interest develops into intense, undeniable magnetism. Starting with when the two first entered the Major League as rookies, the episode takes us through their on-and-off rule meetings, eventually culminating in an emotional kiss at an after-party.

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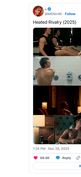
Following this, the hockey rivals begin a secret romance, characterised by fake names on their phones, but real chemistry that follows them even outside their rendezvous. Interspersed with heated intimate scenes, the Olympics serve as a turning point for the relationship between Shane and Ilya. The physical attraction and crisis make sense for the closeted hockey players, but anything deeper that could potentially make them notice the importance of their presence is forbidden. Shane feels too much, but so does Ilya, and the juxtaposition between the fraught intimacy and open communication during their encounters proves that the hookups mean more to them than they're willing to admit.



Heated Rivalry Main Characters & Cast

Shane Hollander is played by Hudson Williams, a Vancouver native for whom this is set to be a breakout role. Having played recurring characters in several series, including Allegiance and Tracker, Williams leads this HBO series as Hollander, the perfectionist captain of the Montreal Meteors, who struggles with the dichotomy between being the poster straight boy and his attraction to Ilya.

Played by Connor Storrie, Ilya Rozanov is Shane's rival and lover. As the overly confident Boston Raiders captain, Ilya is confident in his skills as a player, but his complications of being a Major League player and queer weigh him down. His strained relationships with his teammates and his short-lived overnight dating partner add to his troubles, leading Ilya to support a cold facade to conceal his true emotions. Storrie previously played the role of an inmate in Joker: Folie à Deux.

Why Heated Rivalry Works

Queer-centric television series are having a moment now. Content with younger main characters (Heartstopper, Young Royals, etc.) is being churned out. Still, there is a serious lacuna of stories with older characters dealing with something other than growing pains. After Queer as Folk, Heated Rivalry taps into this demand.

Apart from the intense, intimate scenes, the show dedicates time to tender moments and stolen kisses, offering a respite for audiences. Social media can't wait to see what happens next, and neither can we.

Episode 3 Release Date & Expected Storyline

The third episode of Heated Rivalry will air on December 5, 2025, and will cover the story of Game Changer, the third book in the Rachel Reid series. New York defenseman captain Scott Hunter (played by François Arnaud) discovers that his losing streak is broken after a lucky smoothie, courtesy of Kip Grady (Robbie Q.K.), and now wishes to chase the same drink along with the maker.

New episodes (six in all) come out every Friday till December 26, 2025 on Crave (Canada) and HBO Max (USA and Australia).

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