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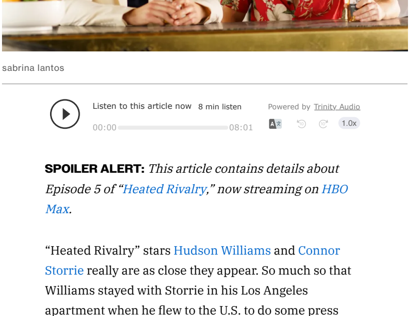
'Heated Rivalry' Star Hudson Williams on Spooning With Connor Storrie Off-Camera, Why Shane Came Out as a Bottom in Episode 5 and Wanting to Gain Muscle for Season 2

By Marc Malkin



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SPOILER ALERT: *This article contains details about Episode 5 of "Heated Rivalry," now streaming on HBO Max.*

"Heated Rivalry" stars Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie really are as close they appear. So much so that Williams stayed with Storrie in his Los Angeles apartment when he flew to the U.S. to do some press together for the show.

"We were like, 'Oh, my God, if people saw us just getting ready in the morning, giving each other big spooning hugs, just to say we're proud of each other,' people would be going crazy," Williams tells me during a Zoom video interview on Tuesday. "If only one fan had access, God forbid. But yeah, we just love each other very dearly."

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It's been less than a month since "Heated Rivalry" premiered on HBO Max — the company acquired Jacob Tierney's adaptation of Rachel Reid's queer romance novel series "Game Changers" from Canadian streamer Crave — but Williams and Storrie have quickly become the It Boys of Hollywood for their work as professional hockey stars Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, respectively. Their performances — the hot and the steamy sex scenes as well as the emotional rollercoaster rides — are not only the talk of the town, but they've also become viral hits with memes and GIFs flooding social media.

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...apolis early and we had a coach, Liz Himmelstein. She gave us tapes and we would read the lines with her.

"It's sort of overwhelming and daunting," Williams says. "The people who reach out, the free stuff that I don't need — but that's very nice — the offers, the not knowing what's up or down, has been a lot."

Let's get right to it — Episode 5.

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I love that episode a lot.

I didn't realize that I wasn't breathing when Scott was motioning for Kip to come down to the rink. I was like, "Is he going to kiss him?" When they kissed, I exhaled and teared up.

You just gave me chills. Wow.

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And then Connor delivering that monologue on the phone in Russian.

I hadn't seen that yet because I wasn't there for that day, but then the first time I got to see it, I was like, "Holy shit! Oh, my God! What an actor!" I'm a Connor Storrie fan.

Did you know what these books were before you auditioned?

I didn't even know hockey smut was a thing.

There's your now famous quote in which you said that you thought Connor was going to pin you down and fuck you during your chemistry read.

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Obviously, that quote is tongue in cheek. I'd read a decent amount of the book and read some discussion about the characters before my read with Connor so I kind of knew what Ilya should be like. I knew that they have this soft sub/dom relationship. It was like, "OK, Ilya should be someone who could pin Shane down and fuck him." That was Connor.

Did you think it was going to be Shane's girlfriend Rose who would help him come out as gay?

No, because I knew nothing about the books. That scene broke me. Just even reading it, I was like, "What a blessing for Shane to have a person who he can talk to because Ilya, God bless him, he's an awful communicator, just truly one of the worst. He's Slavic. Those guys aren't the best at doing the heart-to-heart. To have someone like Rose, who's liberal and kind and soft and forward-thinking, there are women who would be really hurt by what happened with Shane, but she is such a beautiful character.

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In the same scene, Shane also comes out as a bottom.

I had to clarify.

I have to say I was surprised when he was like, "Yeah, I prefer being the hole than the peg."

Shane's on the spectrum so he has to be specific.

What did you learn about yourself while filming the show?

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That's a good question. I think I had my own biases, maybe that would be too strong of a word, but my own discomfort if I expressed myself fully, physically and affectionately, both with women and men. It would feel inappropriate. I realized if you really do love someone — platonically or not — I'm such a tactile, sensory person. There are so many taboos. It's much harder on men. I had to let that go, and I got to learn how freeing that is. That also went hand-in-hand with being myself, truly as an artist. Connor was also a great person to have at my side. I think we both opened each other up to just be freer, more fully expressive.

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Tell me about your first sex scene with Connor in the hotel room. Connor is fully dressed but you had to get naked.

There's a quick shot of him fucking me doggy style. I remember, I was like, "Oh yeah, OK, get naked, have this rough sex. That's kind of cool." The only thing that that day that I was left with was stomach pain because his genitalia is in a cock sock, a ballet slipper, but it's lined up below my butt. They're like, "Do you want a pad?" There's a crash pad that intimacy coordinators provide to so you can get a hard thrust. I was like, "I'm good, I'm tough. I'm comfortable, cozy." But he starts going and male genitalia is very obtrusive. It's not discreet. We start filming and its crashing into into my balls, and he starts slamming me. My stomach is in a twisting pain. So that was the only part that I was like, "Fuck, that kind of hurt." But beyond that, it was more like how do I not make people on set uncomfortable. I don't want to be here with my butthole in the air and then make a grip uncomfortable when they come to fix a light. But once I found out they were so warm and really passionate about the show, I didn't have to tiptoe, and I was very comfortable getting naked.

Have you always been comfortable being naked or that's something that came while filming the show?

I was very uncomfortable being naked like in high school. It terrified me. But then acting freed me up. You have to be emotionally naked and physically naked. I worked in acting classes doing scenes where I'm very not clothed, doing short films where I'm doing sex scenes that are a lot less glamorous and lot less nicely lit than "Heated Rivalry." I found a way to be comfortable with both my sexuality, my sensuality and my naked body before the show.

Should there be a crossover of "Heated Rivalry" and "I Love LA"?

There has to be. I am such a big fan of their show. I love Odessa [A'zion]. I love Josh Hutcherson. They're all so brilliantly funny. I find myself rewinding scenes just to remember a line they said.

Have you heard from Jordan Firstman since everything went down? [The "I Love LA" star faced backlash when he said in a recent interview that the depiction of gay sex in "Heated Rivalry" is "not how gay people fuck."]

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I like cattiness and opinionated people. That's never bugged me. It was a little bitchy, but that's OK in my books. There have been days when I've done 17 interviews in a day, so you're not exactly going to be as good at censoring things. It's no hard feelings, but he reached out and sent a very nice apology. [Just a couple hours after this interview, Williams met Firstman for the first time at a party and posted a photo of them together on his Instagram.]

I think a lot of people are going to jump on the line that Rose says about there being a lot of gay actors who aren't out of the closet.

I like how the show doesn't necessarily comment on it because Rose never goes, "You know, these pussies stay in the fucking closet." She understands her conversation with Shane is in confidence, and it's private. Me being a young actor and not knowing how to do any of this, I think Connor and I both were very quickly on the same page of, "We don't have to do this. It's 2025 so let's just keep that private."

When do you start shooting Season 2?

Maybe someone has told me July or August, but I really don't know.

So you're going to have to keep in shape for a while.

I'm gaining 10 pounds for Season 2 — 10 lean pounds.

This Q&A was edited for length and clarity.

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