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Hockey player's viral coming out was 'overwhelming' in 'the best way possible'

Hockey player Sam Kurtanec shares how his *Heated Rivalry* inspired decision to share that he is gay has impacted him and so many others.

Sam Kurtanec (left) and Ilya Ovchinnikov (right) in *Heated Rivalry* | Credit: Crave

By Paige Reiner

Last Mod: 12.12.25

Hockey player Sam Kurtanec, who recently came out as gay after being inspired by the actions of his character, shared on Instagram that he was not clear what his life has been like since his big announcement, but that his coworkers were great.

"Did I ever expect this level of fame at all," Kurtanec says, adding, "I just felt it was finally my time to share my truth, to share my story."

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"It's been overwhelming, but honestly, in the best way possible," he tells the: "What inspired me really to put after *Heated Rivalry*, for me, it was the fact that there is a lot of Russia, Scotty, Ilya out there in the world, and I felt like I could be the Canadian that's just a little more in the spotlight, and I'm sure a lot of other people are still in the closet playing hockey. I know I don't know you're out there, you'll get through this, you'll find your tribe. They're fictional characters, but it's real life at the same time."

Kurtanec never played in the NHL but played in several leagues and said he was inspired by the show to come out.

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"I know many closeted and gay men in the hockey world are being hit hard by *Heated Rivalry* success," he sentiments told Out. "Never in my life did I think something so positive and loving could come from such a masculine sport. I'm struggled for last few weeks to put those emotions into words, finding the impact on team dynamics, etc."

Kurtanec said he has been "very, very, very, very, very" in touch with Hudson and Connor Storrie of Ilya Rozanov, his Russian rival turned lover. While there have been no sex players in the NHL, the league's commitment said that he "trusted" the words to put those has said the show is a "unique drive for creating new lives."

Watch Kurtanec's statement ahead.

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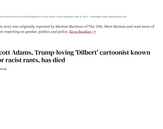
By Paige Reiner



University of Arkansas campus | Credit: Bernard Brown Photography/Shutterstock

The University of Arkansas has withdrawn a job offer to Emily Suski as dean of its law school because she signed on to a friend of the court brief supporting transgender athletes. Keep Reading →

Los Angeles police won't stop man from throwing dog poop at LGBTQ+ youth center

By Sam Maxwell

AFGO LGBTQ+ Youth Center in Los Angeles | © 2025 Google Street View

The person who has been throwing bags of dog poop at an LGBTQ+ youth center in Los Angeles has been found — but isn't facing any charges. Keep Reading →

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By Jessica Gonzalez

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By Paige Reiner

GLAAD, people of color and the men dating Donald Trump's second term are gender identities discussed across the board, new research has found. | Credit: Getty Images

LGBTQ+ people are going back into the closet during Donald Trump's second term as queer visibility decreases across the board, new research has found. Keep Reading →

Progressive Democratic women take the lead in reviving 'abolish ICE' messaging

By Nora Neibar

Carrie Lynch at Ocean of Art | Credit: Courtesy of Carrie Lynch | Credit: Jon Lewis Photography | © 2025 Jon Lewis Photography | Photo: Jon Lewis

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Scott Adams, Trump loving 'Dilbert' cartoonist known for racist rants, has died

By Paige Reiner

Scott Adams in 2011 | Credit: Photo: Pete Souza/Creative Commons | Credit: Adobe Stock

Scott Adams, creator of the Dilbert comic strip and a major supporter of Donald Trump, has died at age 68. Keep Reading →

Conservative Californians ask SCOTUS to allow forced outing of transgender students

By Paige Reiner

Courtroom | Credit: Bing Guan/Getty Images | Credit: Getty Images/Shutterstock

A conservative legal group, representing parents and teachers in California, has filed an emergency appeal with the U.S. Supreme Court asking it to allow school officials to inform parents and teachers about students' transgender identity, including chosen name and pronouns, even against their wishes. Keep Reading →

7 takeaways from Supreme Court arguments about bans on trans women and girls in sports

By Michael Biggs

Hannah Mitchell plays softball outside the U.S. Supreme Court as oral arguments about bans on transgender women and girls in sports are heard inside. | Credit: Getty Images

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday heard nearly four hours of arguments in two cases, Little v. Hecox from Idaho and West Virginia v. B.P.J., that could define the future of transgender women and girls' participation in school sports nationwide. Keep Reading →

Justice Department lawyers resign after push to investigate Renee Good's widow

By Paige Reiner

Jessica Rose, Brad Lenzi & Alexander Kolodin | Credit: DOJ, AP & Gofund Image

Several career employees at the U.S. Department of Justice have resigned over the department's intention to investigate the widow of Renee Nicole Good, the woman shot to death by a federal agent in Minneapolis last week, and other DOJ actions. Keep Reading →

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