

Malachi Lefurgey · 16 hours ago · 3 min read

## Commentary: Heated Rivalry, a game-changer series



Heated Rivalry cast, Hudson Williams (Shane Hollander) and Connor Storrie (Ilya Rozanov). (Credit: Pinterest)

Anyone else feeling the unexplainable void in your soul after watching *Heated Rivalry*?

Over the long and extremely needed winter break, I, like everyone else that isn't a hockey fan and attends a liberal arts school, sat and watched the six-episode queer, steamy and "snipe" of a show called *Heated Rivalry*.

And, might I add that to write this commentary, I had to lie in bed and watch *Heated Rivalry* edits for a logical two hours alongside listening to the many playlists dedicated to the show on Spotify.

*Heated Rivalry* is based on Nova Scotia's Rachel Reid's *Game Changers* book series. The show starts in 2008, following Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie) in their rookie years before being drafted into the major hockey leagues.

What started with a quick and lingering look during the showers after a competitive gym session, with quick hookups here and there between crossover hockey games, turns into a nine-year-long, complex, sexual and yearning relationship between the two characters.

I have read numerous articles on the show. In fact, The Canadian Press stated that Canada's Cultural Minister Marc Miller was "keen to watch more" after watching the first episode and that "it has a great plot."

Without giving the whole show away, the first episode is quite steamy and could be described in two words: sex and hockey. But that's right Miller, I agree, a very great plot indeed.

The show was filmed in the steel city of Hamilton, Ont., which was, coincidentally, the city I was born in. Who knows, maybe if I had never moved to New Brunswick, I would have been cast and would be famous right now.

Episodes one and two, in my hopeless romantic heart's opinion (I will contradict later), were all about sex. Which reeled the viewers in before setting the show in an episode-per-week viewership.

It wasn't until episode three that I was kicking my feet and screaming at my cat, saying, "Bella, what the freak? This is true gay love. What has happened to the world?"

This particular episode introduced two new characters, Scott Hunter (Francois Arnaud) and Christopher Grady (Robbie Graham-Kuntz).

The camera rolls with the usual rom-com entrance, Kip half-asleep behind the smoothie bar as famous hockey player Hunter comes in sweaty after his run. Their eyes meet, small smirks being passed as Hunter orders a blueberry and banana smoothie.

The contrast between the two "couples" allows viewers to connect both their sexual desires and their romantic connection.

The show has taken the world by storm, going viral overnight and surpassing the number one hit TV show on HBO and Crave.

I have talked to numerous people who have watched the show and feel a strong connection to it.

Throughout these conversations, I have found a conclusion to the chokehold the show has placed on many.

Gay culture has been on the rise in the last several years and having two very attractive actors play closeted gay men in a male and straight-dominated field, with sexual and romantic tension, switches the stereotypical narrative we are all so used to.

Only a story written by a bisexual woman and directed by a gay man, Jacob Tierney, could have created such a masterpiece.

The show first aired on Nov. 28 and it's already set to continue for another two seasons.

The show finishes with Shane and Ilya taking their sunglasses off, finally accepting the sun.

"I'm coming to the cottage," said Ilya Rosanov.

On Jan. 14, hockey player Jesse Kortuem came out as gay after being inspired by the show.

On his Instagram, Kortuem stated, "It's a story about being a closeted athlete, the struggle to reconcile two identities and finally finding a tribe that changed everything."

Hockey LGBTQ Love Heated Rivalry Rachel Reid Connor Storrie Hudson Williams  
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