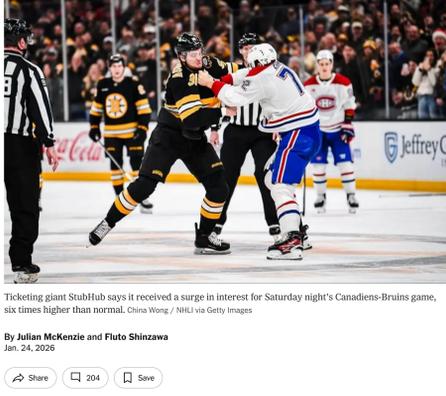


# 'Heated Rivalry' effect? Interest surges in Boston-Montreal NHL game



Ticketing giant StubHub says it received a surge in interest for Saturday night's Canadiens-Bruins game, six times higher than normal. China Wong / NHL via Getty Images

By **Julian McKenzie** and **Fluto Shinzawa**  
Jan. 24, 2026

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**BOSTON** — It doesn't take much for fans to get excited about a matchup featuring the Montreal Canadiens and Boston Bruins, considering their long, storied rivalry. But a recent TV show's eruption could be a factor in increased interest for the latest iteration of this Original Six rivalry.

Ticketing giant StubHub says it received a surge in interest for Saturday night's game, six times higher than average. The show, "Heated Rivalry," on Crave and HBO Max, primarily focuses on a romance between two male hockey players who play for rival Montreal- and Boston-based teams. StubHub says the surge is 35 percent higher than in a typical matchup between the two teams. Finally, 82 percent of those who have purchased tickets are first-time buyers, three times more than usual.

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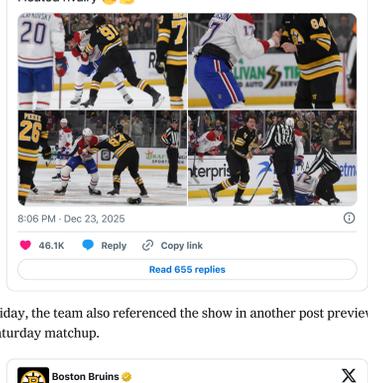
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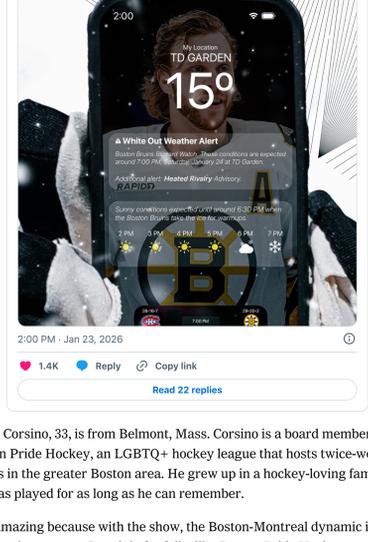
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While tickets remain available, the cheapest seats — as of Thursday night — are \$199 USD each from the TD Garden's balcony zone. If you're looking to spend big, two pairs of tickets near center ice flanking the arena's penalty boxes are at \$16,068 each — down from \$22,112.

In late December, the Bruins' social media team referenced the show in a post during a previous Canadiens-Bruins matchup in Boston.



On Friday, the team also referenced the show in another post previewing the Saturday matchup.



Kevin Corsino, 33, is from Belmont, Mass. Corsino is a board member of Boston Pride Hockey, an LGBTQ+ hockey league that hosts twice-weekly games in the greater Boston area. He grew up in a hockey-loving family and has played for as long as he can remember.

"It's amazing because with the show, the Boston-Montreal dynamic is so true to what we see. Certainly for folks like Boston Pride Hockey, certainly for myself and other members, you do kind of see a little bit of similarity. You kind of see yourself in the mirror. You're like, 'Oh my God, this is in our backyard. This could be like the Bruins and Canadiens.' Obviously it's not, but it's exciting."

Corsino used to play in men's leagues when he was in college. He did not enjoy the atmosphere.

"I never felt like there was a space for being able to be open, be a little bit more myself. It wasn't really a welcoming environment," Corsino said. "That was for the majority of my time growing up. There was a lot of battling homophobia and slurs. Around college time, I started to explore other options that were a little more queer-friendly, ally-friendly."

The growing interest hasn't been limited to Canadiens and Bruins games. NHL single-game ticket sales on StubHub are up 82 percent compared to last season. The ticketing company also says it has seen a 40 percent increase in general interest for NHL tickets and a 75 percent surge in NHL ticket searches, as well as a 5 percent increase in first-time NHL ticket buyers since the show first aired on Nov. 28, 2025.

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The show has become a talking point for discussions about hockey culture and its relationship with the LGBTQ+ community. Last week, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said he binged the entire show in one night while adding that the league has "meaningfully embraced" the LGBTQ+ community thanks to a list of initiatives and partnerships. Earlier that day, "Heated Rivalry" actor François Arnaud [called on the league to show "actual openness to diversity."](#)

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The 73-year-old called the hit TV show a "wonderful" and "compelling" story but said the content "might be a little spicy" for young people.

Corsino said that the virality of the show is helping people think more about conversations about LGBTQ+ inclusion in the sport.

"It's an entertaining show for sure. But I think further than just the entertainment factor is the ability for a show to spark conversations we're having right now. It's the ability for folks to say, 'Hey, they're like me and they're doing the game. They're playing the game. They're in the game. There's a space for me.'"

Boston defenseman Charlie McAvoy used rainbow-colored tape on his shaft during warmups on Thursday before the Bruins' 4-3 win over the Vegas Golden Knights. The Bruins and TD Garden hosted "Hockey is for Everyone" Night.

"I think it's growing and I think the league's done great things," McAvoy said of the event and the growth of "Heated Rivalry" in making the LGBTQ+ community more welcome in the NHL. "Here within our room, we've tried to do things as well to echo that message and make everyone feel safe and comfortable within the game. It's very important. I haven't seen it, but from what I've heard of that show, it's been growing the game a lot in support of that community. That stuff's all awesome. It's awesome for hockey. It's awesome for everybody. I'm happy. I'm happy that we won tonight on this night. Hopefully a lot of people feel the support of the Bruins."

McAvoy also said he is starting to see more progress toward LGBTQ+ inclusion and acceptance in the NHL.

"I see it in here most definitely. I think you see it in the game too with initiatives like this. I've heard so much support from people within those communities that it means a lot to them. So it's the least we can do to show our support and show we're all on the same team."

Corsino also thinks "Heated Rivalry" is pushing acceptance in the right direction.

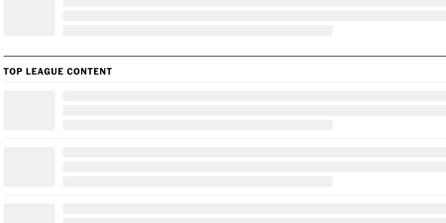
"We're seeing a show that people are attracted to (and) they want to see more of. I think that's really telling. There's been so many immense strides over the years around acceptance and visibility in the sport. We've got to continue that. We want to make sure that folks can see themselves in the game and feel like there's a space for them."

*The Athletic, which has a partnership with StubHub, maintains full editorial independence. Partners have no control over or input into the reporting or editing process and do not review stories before publication.*

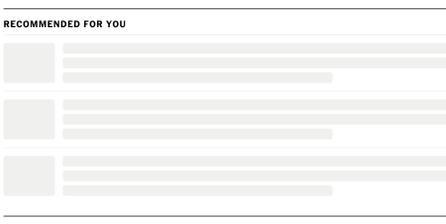
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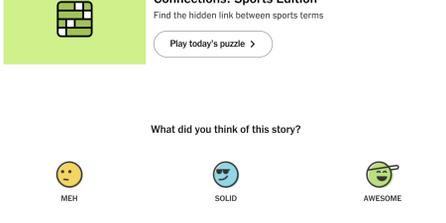
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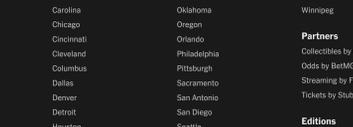
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