



HOCKEY NHL SPORTS

NHL's Ottawa Senators sell out jerseys for 'Heated Rivalry' players Hollander and Rozanov

The NHL team sees great demand for custom jerseys for the fictional players Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov on "Heated Rivalry."

Jim Buzinski
January 21, 2026, 8:30 am PST



Ottawa Senators jerseys with "Heated Rivalry" characters Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. | Ottawa Senators shop

Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are fictional gay players in a fictional hockey league in the smash TV hit "Heated Rivalry," but that has not stopped fans from buying their replica jerseys sold by what is inspired marketing by the NHL's Ottawa Senators.

"We had the idea on Friday morning, and we had a whole bunch of jerseys in the store by Saturday night and our game and sold out within probably an hour before the first period was over," Peter Shier, VP of Marketing for the Ottawa Senators, **told CTV News**.

It just wasn't in-arena sales that were popular, with **Shier saying** online sales went well.

"We woke up on Sunday morning, we had orders from, I think, Germany, Sweden, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, from all over the world," he said. "It's really great."

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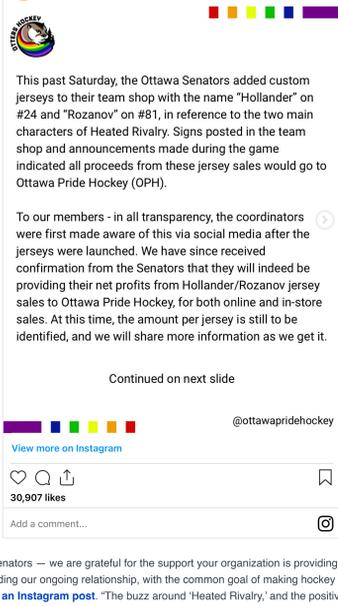
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"Heated Rivalry" follows the careers and budding romance of gay Canadian player Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Russian Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie), along with steamy bedroom scenes, which become a **breakout hit** for its creator, the Canadian streamer Crave, and in the U.S. for HBO Max. The series has become a cultural phenomena, with appearances aplenty for the actors on award shows and late-night TV.

It was only fitting that selling merchandise would be a logical fit but maybe a bit surprising that an NHL team is all in, given the fact that there has never been an out gay NHL player. In fact, **some people first thought** the announcement of the jerseys was a prank.

The Senators' store has its own **dedicated Hollander and Rozanov jersey page**, with home and away versions that sell for \$235 each. Proceeds go to the **Ottawa Pride Hockey**, the city's LGBTQ rec hockey league.



"To the Ottawa Senators — we are grateful for the support your organization is providing, and are committed to building our ongoing relationship, with the common goal of making hockey more welcoming," the group **said in an Instagram post**. "The buzz around "Heated Rivalry," and the positive response to the jerseys released by the Senators, prove there is value and demand to make hockey more inclusive.

"In doing so, we also commit to holding the Senators and NHL accountable when actions fall short of community expectations. This includes the recent signing of goalie **James Reimer** (who refused to wear a Pride Night jersey while with the San Jose Sharks in 2023).

"The NHL sets the tone of hockey culture at the highest level. We remain guarded towards the NHL's commitment to inclusivity. The initial assumptions that these jerseys were not real say a great deal about the level of trust the queer community has for the NHL as a whole. Moving forward, we hope to see the NHL embody change at the systemic level, to ensure that hockey is representative of the diversity of the entire community."

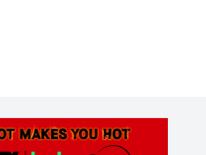
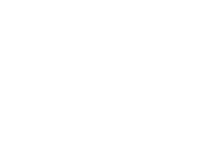
The reality is that the Senators, like most teams, allow fans to create a custom jersey with practically any name on it, but what is great here is that they made it easy for "Heated Rivalry" fans and are **promoting it**, including during Saturday's game.

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Jim Buzinski is co-founder of Outsports.com and has been a journalist for more than 40 years, most recently at the Los Angeles Times.
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