

ON THIN ICE

# HUDSON WILLIAMS TEASES 'EXTERNAL BATTLE' IN 'HEATED RIVALRY' SEASON 2

The star of the hit series appeared on *The Tonight Show* to discuss the show's success and to hint at what will come next

By EMILY ZEMLER  
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Hudson Williams on 'The Tonight Show'

Hudson Williams made his late-night debut on *The Tonight Show* last night and took the opportunity to hint at what's to come on the second season of hit series *Heated Rivalry*.

Williams sat down with host **Jimmy Fallon** to chat about the show's success, but first the actor appeared in the monologue to stop a debate between Fallon and the Roots' Tariq about the lead characters Ilya and Shane. After the pair had properly worked themselves up, Williams stepped onto the stage and affirmed, "You're both right."



During his conversation with Fallon, Williams admitted that the show's explosion of popularity around the world hasn't sunk in yet. "I kind of just turn into a deer in headlights every time," he said.

Williams recalled auditioning for *Heated Rivalry*, which is based on a book series. He noted that neither he nor his co-star Connor Storrie had read it. "We didn't even know about hockey smut," he said. "We didn't know that it existed. But I was reading the book as the audition process went along. And it was way too long. It took way too long for me just to get that call. So by the time I got the call, I was like, 'Finally!'"

He admitted that one of the "harder elements" of the show is pretending to dislike Storrie's character when the actors are friends in real life. "We just became besties right away," Williams said.

Fallon also asked Williams about professional hockey players and the surrounding industry voicing their support of the series. "There are podcasters who are used to analyzing this very masculine sport getting to analyze our show," Williams noted. "There's a lot of love." Fallon affirmed, "It's a great message for our young kids out there."

Most importantly, Williams teased Season 2. "There are some meanies," Williams hinted. "There are some big baddies. If Season 1 is an internal battle, Season 2 is more of an external battle." He added, joking, "And they all die!"

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*Heated Rivalry* debuted on HBO Max in November. Based on the bestselling *Game Changers* book series from author Rachel Reid, the six-episode season follows rival hockey players Ilya Rozanov (Storrie) and Shane Hollander (Williams) as they navigate the spotlight as young athletes while dealing with a budding — if confusing — romance.

"It's about two people learning about who they are and what their relationship is through fucking," creator **Jacob Tierney** previously told *Rolling Stone*. "The only times they're being honest with each other is when they're having sex. Otherwise, it's loads of bluster. It's loads of pretending. It's loads of two people who don't, frankly, understand what they're feeling and who don't really get it takes a long time for their emotions to catch up to what their bodies are doing." @

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