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6 BOOKS TO READ AFTER 'HEATED RIVALRY'

Jonesing for more gay hockey romances? These books just might do the trick

By CT JONES
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Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov in 'Heated Rivalry'

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The hit HBO series *Heated Rivalry* only had six episodes, but that was more than enough to turn the show into a phenomenon this winter. Based on the novel by Rachel Reid, *Heated Rivalry* follows hockey stars Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie) and Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) as rivals embroiled in a secret gay relationship. Since the show's premiere on Nov. 28, the smutty hockey romance has become the show of the moment, with references as Nill, games, late night appearances, and celeb requests to be involved in the next season — transforming Storrie and Williams into certifiable stars in the process.

Creator Jacob Tierney told *Rolling Stone* in December that he first got into the world of hockey romance books through Heated Rivalry — but loved how much the series focused on Shane and Ilya's relationship first and their potential coming out stories second.

"My first discovery was like, 'Oh, my God, these books are so smutty.' I'll be walking my dog and [thinking], 'If you knew what was happening in my ears right now,'" Tierney said. "But what stood out to me in retrospect is that [*Heated Rivalry*] accomplishes a different task than these books usually do. This is not about somebody coming out, it's about two people figuring out they are allowed to be in love. And that vig where the other books rag really stuck with me."

He's not the only one who loves Shane and Ilya's love story. Sales for *Heated Rivalry* have skyrocketed, since the series' release. The book is now a *New York Times* bestseller, and according to the *Hollywood Reporter*, audiobook streams on Spotify are up 1,500 percent. Tierney, Williams, and Storrie have all publicly said that fans will have to wait until at least late 2026 for another season. But for fans who have already finished the series — and at least one rewatch — here are some other hockey romance books that might help in the meantime.

1 'Him' by Elle Kennedy and Sarina Bowen

2015

In this instance, two authors mean twice the hockey romance. Him is a college hockey romance that takes a will-they-won't-they scenario off the rink and directly into a summer camp. Hockey players Jamie Canning and Ryan Wesley were best friends, until an accident eight four years ago completely ended their friendship. When they both become coaches at a summer hockey camp, the two are given the chance to figure out if this is a one-time secret or a potential for a life-long love. In addition to the secret relationship setting, Jamie and Ryan's role as coaches can serve a dual purpose. If you're not completely caught up on all the hockey terminology, reading about these boyfriends teaching kids how to play might be the perfect way into the game.

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2 'Like a Power Play' by Elle Sprinkle

2025

Yes, the people are desperate right now for gay hockey romance novels. But what if the book was sapphic instead? *Like a Power Play* keeps all the steam and heartache but focuses on college women's hockey star Peyton Clarke and the student coach who can't seem to leave her alone. Peyton is working her body and mind to the max to succeed, a pressure she can't seem to escape as the daughter of a famous NHL player. But when Darcy Cole, a former college star who quit the sport abruptly, says she can help Peyton's game, two clash over whether relationships and future dreams can co-exist. This romance has lots of smut and takes a slow burn approach to Peyton and Darcy's fling. But the payoff is plentiful, meaning even readers who are looking for an immediate romp won't be disappointed.

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3 'Winging It' by Ashlyn Kane and Morgan James

2015

Move over rivals. In Winging It, the only thing worse than rivals in love is teammates. Gabe Martin is confident that his leadership on the Nordiques, a calm head, and never coming out as gay will ensure his legacy and eventual induction in the Hall of Fame. But when he's accidentally outed, a devastating betrayal and sexts him and his team on a losing streak. Gabe wants to get back in his groove, which for him means ignoring the rising tension he has with his teammate Dante Ballerini. But in this steamy novel, the two have to work together to find out if the NHL is ready for out hockey players who aren't ashamed of who they are.

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4 'Check, Please!' by Ngozi Ukazu

2018

Let's be clear — Ngozi Ukazu's fan-favorite hockey graphic novel is not smutty. In fact, it's entirely PG. But this novel captured hearts when Ukazu first posted it as a webcomic on Tumblr and has maintained one of the defining texts of the hockey romance space. Former junior figure skating champion Eric Bittle is a skater and expert social media star, but he's still nervous about his time at Samwell University going perfectly. He already has to deal with converting his technical prowess on the ice into something useful for the hockey team, so a crush on his team captain Jack Int's adorable. Neither is trying to come out as gay in a sport that isn't so accepting. What *Check, Please!* Doesn't have in many situations, it more than makes up for with its earnest and heartwarming approach to two hockey players navigating their secret relationship and college at the same time.

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5 'Pucking Strong' by Emily Rath

2025

Pucking Strong might not feature two NHL players in love, but this novel also gives readers a long look into the world of gay romance on the hockey rink — with an added sprinkle of fake dating. Swedish hockey player Hertefa Karlsson is the famous and successful forward for the Jacksonville Rays. But after his sister dies in a tragic accident, the Swedish government refuses to give him custody of his young niece unless he's married. Just when it seems like hope is lost, the team's physical therapist Teddy O'Connor agrees to marry him. Sparks fly between the two, but a faked attempt at a real relationship could mean Karlsson losing custody. Is there a way the two can keep their fake family together and see if there's anything between them? In addition to the campy setup for Teddy and Hertefa's love, *Pucking Strong* contains detailed descriptions of hockey games and the physical maintenance actually required to keep players on the ice, which could be the perfect read for *Heated Rivalry* fans who actually want a bit more hockey with their smut.

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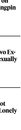
6 'The Long Game' by Rachel Reid

2022



Sometimes, the only thing that can fix a hangover is more of the same. The hit HBO series was adapted directly from Rachel Reid's book of the same name, but that's not the only time Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov get to be together. *The Long Game* is the sixth book in Reid's Game Changers series and the two lovers' story continues there. Both the book and series ended with Shane and Ilya determined to slowly get their fans adjusted to the idea of seeing the pair as friends instead of rivals. Shane and Ilya start a charity together, and Ilya begins playing for a hockey team in Ottawa to be closer to Shane. But after years of keeping their secret, the pressure begins to weigh on the famous couple, straining their relationship. Shane and Ilya are forced to decide whether going public with their relationship will mean the end of the careers that brought them together in the first place. Reid doesn't skimp on the signature steam *Heated Rivalry* is known for, but adds enough romance, brushes with death, and epic confessions to make any stan happy. Happy reading!

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