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Much Longer Can Heated Rivalry Keep Thi

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# How Much Longer Can *Heated Rivalry* Keep This Going?



By Fran Hoepfner, a senior news writer who covers pop culture and the internet

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The show stopped airing weeks ago, but it feels bigger and more immune to overexposure than ever. Photo: Rich Polk/2026GG/Penske Media via Getty Images

Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams sat at the front of the room at the 2026 Golden Globes on Sunday at a table with Charli XCX and Hamnet stars Paul Mescal and Jessie Buckley. They were there to present Best Female Supporting Actor on TV and eventually took the stage by way of a bit involving UFC fighters pretending to be their security detail as Chappell Roan's "Pink Pony Club" played. They proceeded to hit their typical beats — joking about how nervous they are and how naked they've been — playing directly to the moms, daughters, and trainers who actually watch their show even if the banter didn't land with

the movie stars around them. Timothée Chalamet won't have time to watch *Heated Rivalry* until at least April.

Storrie's and Williams's presences at the Globes, despite a lack of nominations, was a no-brainer. *Heated Rivalry* is *the* show right now. It doesn't really matter that it ended on December 26, 2025. Most fans are on their second, or third, or ninth watch. If you're on TikTok, the show is running on a loop forever. The HBO series and its lead actors are enjoying one of those rare things in the entertainment business: a positive press cycle with no end in sight.

In retrospect, it feels almost absurd to think that there's a world in which the gay hockey romance isn't a big hit. The show premiered over Thanksgiving weekend, when people were tired and full and bored (and probably also horny), and countered our world's unceasing badness with its world's buoyant sweetness. Storrie, Williams, and showrunner Jacob Tierney began a just-as-affable press run, speaking to anyone and everyone, first the Canadian outlets like CTV's ETalk — there were no major-network interviews or glossy magazine spreads when the series premiered on Canada's Crave and HBO Max — and then the Teen Vogues and BuzzFeeds. So much low-effort, shortform video of the stars flirting and teasing followed.

Most importantly, no matter where they appeared in the first few weeks, Storrie and Williams were abundantly humble. Rachel Reid's novel on which the show was based took about a year to find its audience, and HBO didn't acquire the U.S. and Australian rights until nine days before the premiere. No one was less prepared for people to care this much about these sweet, hunky boys than these sweet, hunky boys. Maybe they too were wondering if *Heated Rivalry* could maintain momentum even if neither Storrie nor

Williams ever explicitly said if they were gay or not. But they probably stopped worrying when *Heated Rivalry* became the most-watched non-animated acquired series on HBO Max since it launched in 2020. The week the finale aired, people spent 324 million minutes streaming the show.

Even Storrie and Williams's second-season renewal video was modest. Because as Storrie made clear when he announced the nominees for the SAG Awards — sorry, "Actor Awards" — a mere eight months ago he was waiting tables. And as Williams made clear in his recent CNN appearance, "It's crazy." Now, they are getting papped at premieres in New York and dinners in Los Angeles as bars on both coasts host marathons of their show. Last week, Williams made his late-night debut on *The Tonight Show* teaching the host how to, um, stretch. Storrie makes his debut on *Late Night With Seth Meyers* tonight. With two months left in awards season, there are more possible red-carpet and photo opportunities than I count.

Will they pop up at the Oscars? Probably not at the ceremony, but it's hard to imagine *Vanity Fair* would withhold an after-party invitation. By then, it will be just a few weeks or couple of months until the second season is shooting and the internet is flooded with on-set photography and a new round of fan speculation. Storrie and Williams will probably take a break from primetime interviews, only to reappear on *Hot Ones* and *Subway Takes* around Thanksgiving, if an early 2027 *Heated Rivalry* return date is to be believed. The show would be smart to maintain an anchor to the holiday season, allowing viewers with ample free time to indulge in their favorite boys again and again.

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Every TV show with a forthcoming new season is likely looking at *Heated Rivalry* and praying its stranglehold on our collective attention span loosens ever so slightly. *Bridgerton*

and *Industry*, both horny in their own rights, can only dream of such endless relevance and minimal friction. *Heated Rivalry*'s unique ability to avoid overdoing it (and mostly ward off *White Lotus*-level rumors about its cast) is due in large part to Storrie's and Williams's willingness to show up, time after time, and acknowledge the surreal joy we're all feeling watching a sexy queer show starring two largely unknown actors avoid Fox News anchor aspersion and make Gayle King blush. As any sports fan knows, endurance is the name of the game.

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