



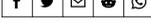
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Jake Eldridge says Heated Rivalry might have helped him come out in American football: 'I was faking my life every day'

"For me personally, it might have changed my timeline, though I'm truly unsure," said Eldridge

By Aaron Sugg



(Image: Instagram/jakeeldridge.)

Jake Eldridge has reflected on how *Heated Rivalry* may have helped him come out in American football after hiding his sexuality while at university.

Eldridge, who played at Rutgers University, said he was constantly worried about teammates's and coaches's reactions to him being gay, which led him to remain closeted.

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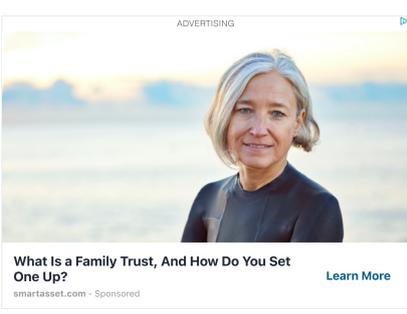
Speaking to **People**, he recalled that hiding his sexuality took a physical and mental toll on his sporting career, ultimately leading him to retire from the sport in 2024.

"I would have felt a little safer" – Jake Eldridge explains how *Heated Rivalry* would have helped him to come out

"If I was a closeted athlete and saw how many people fell in love with the story portrayed in *Heated Rivalry*, I would have felt a little safer," he said.



"That's not to say it would erase all my hesitation about coming out," he added. "Every programme is different, and you know best how your team will react. But it definitely shows that it's possible. For me personally, it might have changed my timeline, though I'm truly unsure."



The 21-year-old came out publicly on social media in 2024. In an emotional video posted to YouTube, he said: "I went about my life for so long trying to fit that mould and hide who I was, and it really, really wrecked me."

"The stress, in my opinion, was me faking my life every day" – Eldridge on hiding his sexuality at university

Eldridge revealed he was hospitalised with ulcerative colitis due to extreme levels of stress, heightened by hiding his true self.

"The stress, in my opinion, was me faking my life every day to please those around me rather than please myself," he said.

"It was a part of myself that I knew, but denied for years and years and years. And I think football for me kind of helped mask that. But football was also the reason I had to mask it," he continued.

The former college athlete now uses his online following of more than 92,000 on TikTok and 51,000 on Instagram to post day-in-the-life content while promoting his acting career.

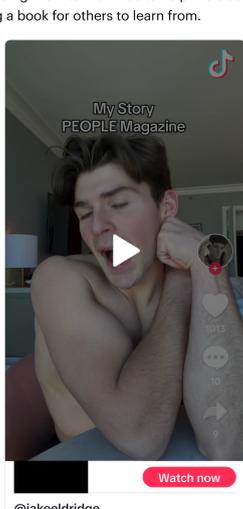
"All I can think about is... how much it would have helped me" – Eldridge on *Heated Rivalry*

Eldridge has previously spoken about how *Heated Rivalry* could have benefited his coming-out journey, sharing a **TikTok video** that has been viewed by over two million users.

He wrote in the caption: "When I watch *Heated Rivalry*, all I can think about is... how much it would have helped me."

Reflecting on the interview with his followers, he said: "I spent so many years of my life worrying about what people thought about me, and in my opinion, coming out should not even be a question."

He added that the purpose of doing the interview was to help the closeted community, with hopes of starting a non-profit and writing a book for others to learn from.



The hockey romance series, starring **Hudson Williams** and **Connor Storrie**, has been praised worldwide by celebrities and sporting professionals for its authentic storytelling – so much so that it has encouraged athletes to come out.

US hockey player Jesse Kortuem came out as gay earlier this month, citing *Heated Rivalry* as his inspiration in a coming-out **Facebook** post.

Renewed for a second season, the series – adapted from author Rachel Reid's *Game Changers* romance novel series – is already available to stream in the USA, Canada and Australia, and in the UK via **Sky** and **Now**.

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Mika and Holly Johnson are Attitude's latest cover stars (Image: Attitude/Jack Chipper)

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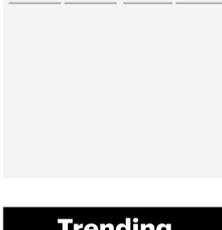
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