

LAND OF IF

HOFSTRA | CULTURE > ENTERTAINMENT

HEATED RIVALRY AND THE POWER OF QUEER VISIBILITY IN SPORTS MEDIA

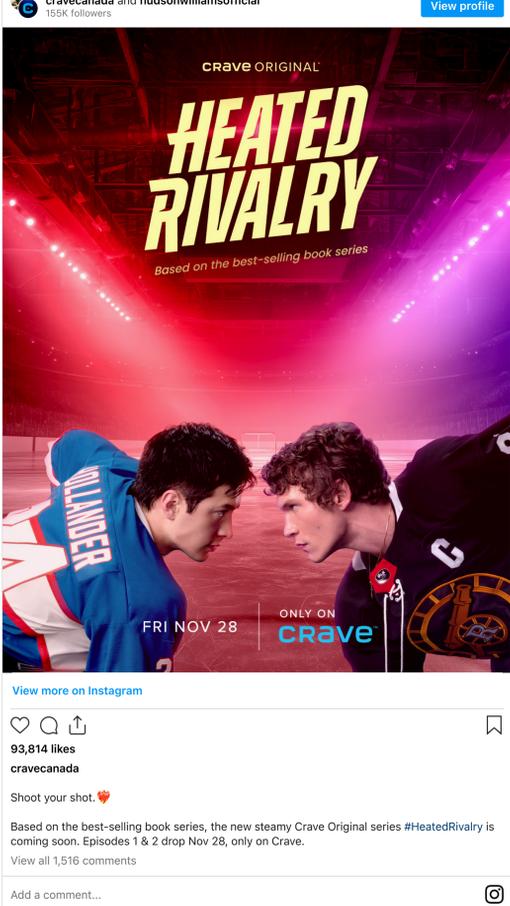
1 HOUR AGO



JOANNA DUGROO
Student Contributor, Hofstra University

This article is written by a student writer from the Her Campus at Hofstra chapter and does not reflect the views of Her Campus.

If you have been anywhere online in the past month, you will have heard of the breakout queer hockey drama, *Heated Rivalry*. This six-episode TV show has been adapted by Jacob Tierney, best known for the Canadian sitcom, *Letterkenny*. It has become one of the most-watched programs on streaming platforms Crave Canada and HBO Max. Originally a novel by Rachel Reid, this series shows a new perspective on queer relationships and how they are portrayed on TV within the sports industry.



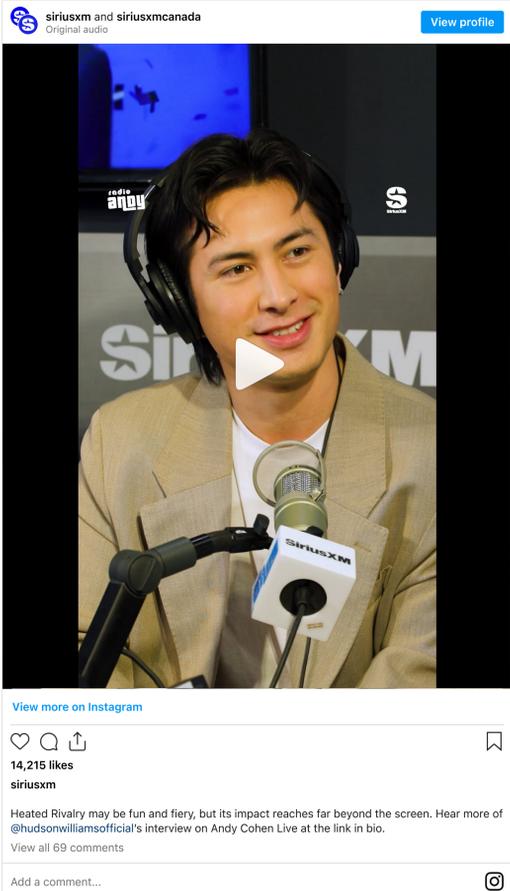
The show focuses on Canada's Shane Hollander and Russia's Ilya Rozanov, who play for Montreal and Boston in the NHL. Both of these characters are at the center of the story, not pushing their experiences as queer players to the side of the narrative. Their emotional connection and draw to each other are the story, with all other plot points moving around them. This series creates a new space for queer intimacy and emotional connection, with small moments of vulnerability and conversation serving as the device that drives it. The character evolution of Shane and Ilya allows them to exist, be flawed, and be drawn to each other despite reasons they shouldn't be. It shows being queer as something that is worth fighting for, despite being a sports drama.



For many members of the LGBTQ community, *Heated Rivalry* creates something that isn't often seen in media, a love story that is solely focused on the love, not just the struggles of being queer. This type of representation is affirming for the community, especially seeing queer men portrayed as desirable and capable of deep love. It has also built a massive online fanbase on social media apps, turning this show into a shared experience not just among members of the community but with others as well.

Heated Rivalry shifts the narrative of masculinity and how sports stories are told on TV. Hockey has been a sport that is usually associated with masculinity and unspoken expectations of heterosexuality, as can be seen with the struggle for character Scott Hunter. Scott is featured prominently in book one of Rachel Reid's hockey romance books, where he struggles with whether or not to come out and go public with his boyfriend, Kip Grady. This story, as well as Shane and Ilya's, has challenged norms and negative stigmas in professional hockey, opening the door to more conversations about inclusion and the queer community.

Hudson Williams, who portrays Shane Hollander, has spoken about messaging men in professional sports who are still in the closet. Williams, as well as Connor Storrie who portrays Ilya Rozanov, have both noted how fun the show is, but also how it can be truly relatable for some professional athletes today. Williams said, "Oh, so this is a fun show, and it's celebratory, but also, sometimes it's just hitting people right in the nerves." This reaction shows that this show isn't just entertainment, but represents real emotions and experiences that athletes navigate in silence.



The success of *Heated Rivalry* has shown that there is a very large audience demand for queer-centered stories. Its performance on HBO Max has shown that storytelling that is developed and told with passion can resonate with audiences beyond its initial target. The success of this show shows that taking risks pays off. It represents a step forward in representation for the LGBTQ community, within genres that have historically excluded them. *Heated Rivalry* sets a new precedent for how queer stories are told in mainstream media.

ENTERTAINMENT HBOMAX HEATED RIVALRY LGBTQ TV



JOANNA DUGROO
Hofstra '26

Joanna is a senior music business student studying at Hofstra University on Long Island. She has a passion for pop culture, music, reading, and theatre!

WE WANNA SLIDE INTO YOUR DMS

(but via email)

The newsletter you won't leave unread.



9 Lansdowne St.
Suite 2
Boston, MA 02215

COMPANY

Her Campus Media
About Us
Shop
Privacy Policy
Terms of Use
Sweepstakes Rules

BRANDS

Spoon University
College Fashionista
InfluenceHer Collective
Generation Hired

JOIN US

Write For Her Campus
Start a Chapter
High School Ambassadors
Be an Influencer
Campus Trendsetters

CONTACT US

Get in Touch
Join the Team
Internships

