



NEWS, SPORTS, 2025-2026

# Heated Rivalry: The Show that Took the World by Storm

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**By: Sofia Escudero**

On November 28th, an episode of a new hockey show which explores queer identities was released on the streaming network Crave. This show, *Heated Rivalry*, took the internet by storm. *Heated Rivalry* (HR) is a live adaption of the books written by Rachel Reid, which follows two hockey stars and their rivalry-turned love story. The show has given a boost to the much needed change in media. As McCaskey junior Anira Acevedo put it, “*Heated Rivalry* is awesome. I like how especially in this political climate, queer media has infiltrated pop culture.”

*Heated Rivalry* is not just a love show, but rather a show that represents the struggles being queer in mainstream media. The show follows the love story of hockey players Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, and how they were in what younger generations refer to as a situationship – which is when two people are talking to each other as if they are in a relationship but they are in fact not in one. Hollander and Rozanov meet when they’re rookie – still in their teen years, and constantly meet up without admitting their feelings, going through some bumps in the road, until they eventually start to secretly date ten years later. The two agree to hold their relationship as a sacred secret in fear of what the public would say.

Throughout the timeframe, the show dives into the fear of being queer and what the media would say. Until recent times, there were rarely any celebrities who identified as LGBTQ+, as we grew up in a world where being queer was seen as an anomaly and people were bullied for it. This led to a country filled with homophobia despite the growing prevalence of LGBTQ+ identification in society. *Heated Rivalry* is one of the first queer sport shows that has rapidly gained popularity. In less than 3 months, the show had garnered so much attention that the actors who played Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie, were featured in GQ and the New York Times, presented the award for Best Supporting Actress in a TV Series at the golden globes, appeared on The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon and Late Night with Seth Meyers, as well as being torch bearers for the 2026 Winter Olympics.

The popularity of the show has not only left an impact on the actors, but has also impacted queer sports players to help them find a new sense of confidence. Jesse Kortuem, a former defensemen/center for Cutting Edges Hockey Club, has come out as gay in mid January and he has said that it is all thanks to *Heated Rivalry*. He has said that growing up in the 2000’s there was always a lack of queer representation and he was scared to come out, but *Heated Rivalry* had given him the confidence to publicly come out. Hudson Williams has also said that multiple closeted athletes had reached out to him since the release of *Heated Rivalry*. An anonymous student at McCaskey has stated that “The show has helped me find the confidence to come out to my family. It went much better than I assumed it would.” Not only has the show created a safe space for professionals, but also for the viewers.

*Heated Rivalry* has left a profound impact on queer people all around the world. It has quickly risen in popularity, which gave a safe space to the LGBTQ+ community and has also created multiple opportunities for the actors, who before the show took off were referred to as unknown actors. In the end, *Heated Rivalry* has become a hit within the LGBTQ+ community – not only providing the community with a relatable show, but giving the community the motivation to come out and embrace their true identity.

Author Note: This article mentions a television series as part of a broader discussion about culture and relationships. It is not meant to encourage or promote students watching the show.

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