

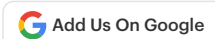
BUSINESS > HOLLYWOOD & ENTERTAINMENT

# 'Heated Rivalry' Stars Reveal What They Would Say To Their Characters

By **Jeff Conway**, Senior Contributor. © Conducting refreshingly engaging interviews with top Hollywood stars.

Follow Author

Published Dec 12, 2025, 12:45pm EST, Updated Dec 22, 2025, 09:25am EST



Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams in "Heated Rivalry"  
SABRINA LANTOS/HBO MAX

*Heated Rivalry* is the show that is currently taking the world by storm about closeted professional hockey players that strive to juggle unexpected love interests, family expectations and public pressures.

Starring Hudson Williams as Canadian hockey star Shane Hollander and Connor Storrie as Russian sensation Ilya Rozanov, *Heated Rivalry* not only effectively showcases the no-holds physical desire between these two young men on-screen, but it comes with a very well-executed production and truly outstanding acting performances from these fast-rising stars.

Based on the popular *Heated Rivalry* books by Rachel Reid and created for the screen by Jacob Tierney, this Crave Canada original series is now streaming in the U.S. on HBO Max, with new episodes dropping on Fridays and a second season announced today.

Yes, the consistently unabashed nudity of these muscular men has become much of the chatter across social media lately, but it is also the heartwarming and deep story about two people in a sport that often demands unwavering masculinity, to actually express vulnerability and slowly defy societal demands that has made so many viewers from all walks of life fall madly in love with this ever-expanding *Heated Rivalry* television universe.



Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie in "Heated Rivalry"  
SABRINA LANTOS/HBO MAX

I sat down with Storrie and Hudson in Los Angeles, California this week to give them a moment to really reflect on *Heated Rivalry's* success, their own stardom and their ongoing creative priorities when it comes to telling these very human stories.

**F**

Read More

**Jeff Conway:** You already see there's a global phenomenon happening - it's growing and growing around this show and your performances, but what has already brought an added joy to your own lives, not only as actors but as humans, throughout this whole experience so far?

**Connor Storrie:** We did a meet-and-greet event in Montreal and then we did one in Toronto - but in Toronto, we were at a bookstore and I think in theory, it's really easy to talk about the importance of representation or what this means to people at large when we talk about communities or demographics that really love this book, but it was such a crazy experience in-person to see someone face-to-face be like, "What you're doing and the person that you are being on-camera means so much to me" and like have tears in their eyes. It's one thing for us to talk at large about that and it become kind of conceptual - it's another thing to look someone in the face and be like - *I feel seen by this person*. I love this.

**Conway:** Hudson, how about for you? What has brought added joy to your own life?

**Hudson Williams:** There's both like the representation of a queer character that a lot of people relate with, whether they feel like him or they feel like they knew him. That element is really beautiful and I didn't know if it would connect, you know? You only hope and it is on the person-to-person level, where they're looking you in their eyes and that means something.

Also, I didn't really get to see many people like me growing up on the screen. So, me and my mom both have like sort of a tense emotion of just - I get to be hopefully an Asian actor that kids get to see on their screen and that kind of gets to be normalized and celebrated, hopefully.

**Conway:** When you first signed on for the show - obviously, you wanted to respect the book, you wanted to respect the TV script and everything like that, but was there anything about the messaging - of all the things you wanted the show to become, was there anything that you were adamant or hopeful that this story and your messaging and performance would not ultimately become?

**Williams:** Mmm! That was in the book or just like in general?

**Conway:** In general. This goes out as a TV show after the book and everything. Was there anything about your story or performance that you're like - *I want this to be all this, but please do not become this!*

**Williams:** Right. Oh, wow!

**Storrie:** I don't think I had anything about the message that I didn't want it to become. I mean, I was really hopeful that I would be artistically inspired by the tone of what was going on. I wanted it to be something that was artful, really well-executed because I think, you know, a lot of people can take a script, no matter how good the script is. Jacob did a great job on the script, but if that went into someone else's hands, I think it could turn into something kind of really commercial and surface-level and corny. Even in terms of just execution, for me at least, if I see a love story or something and the execution and production-wise is just not artistically stimulating, then it's kind of like - *Okay, well*. So, that was my takeaway. I was just like - *I hope that this is great*. The moment I knew it was Jacob, I was like - *Okay, yeah we're good*.



Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams in "Heated Rivalry"  
SABRINA LANTOS/HBO MAX

**Williams:** I didn't want it to be an inauthentic gay experience commodified to sell something to - not to say that like the straight women audience - I think there needs to be care there and Jacob has spoke about how much care he had to cater to that audience, but also, I hoped it wouldn't feel disrespectful to the queer community. I hope it could be something that's celebrated.

**Conway:** When it came to your chemistry together - the sexual chemistry and the camaraderie that you had to create on-screen to be authentic, how did you guys find that unwavering trust between each other to really go to places deep, so on-screen it translated authentic and real and passionate?

---

MORE FOR YOU

---

**Storrie:** To be honest, I didn't have to try to find anything. I think both being performers - like we actors, performers, artists, you're constantly playing a game of stretching yourself and your level of comfort. In our preparation for being actors, we've had to do a million things in acting classes or for self-tape, so it's always a game of like exercising how comfortable you are and how vulnerable you're willing to be. When you meet someone who also matches that level, that threshold, it's so easy to kind of just go crazy. I don't know, maybe it's an energy thing but I just instantly trusted you.



Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams attend the premiere of "Heated Rivalry" at TIFF Lightbox on November 24, 2025 in Toronto, Ontario.  
GETTY IMAGES

**Williams:** Not to toot our own horns or to say that we're - it's impossible for us to ever have bias. I think we're two people who do have a lot of like radical acceptance and just sort of love for a bunch of different types of people, that it always felt like - *Well, why not?* Our expressions of love and affection and everything never felt like we were playing on something or appropriating something. It just felt like we were humans and being authentic to ourselves and how we view love.

**Conway:** Well, it's steamy and it's real.

**Storrie:** Cool!

**Conway:** Lastly, I have a signature question I like to ask actors that play these deep characters. I'm so excited to ask you about this. So Connor and Hudson, if you could speak to Ilya and Shane after embodying them so far on *Heated Rivalry* and give them a comforting message, a warning, anything that you could say to them from seeing this from the outside in? What would you say to your characters, if only you could? What do you feel they need to hear?



Connor Storrie as Ilya Rozanov in "Heated Rivalry"  
SABRINA LANTOS/HBO MAX

**Storrie:** Ooh, that's going to make me cry! Mine is kind of cliché, but it's not your fault. It's not in your control. I don't know if you've read the books, but [Ilya] has some pretty crazy family dynamics that'll come up throughout the rest of the

story and it's really heavy. You can't help but I think carry that your entire life, and I think that informs a lot of his hurt and how he goes about life.



Hudson Williams as Shane Hollander in "Heated Rivalry"  
SABRINA LANTOS/HBO MAX

**Williams:** I would tell Shane that his ideas of perfection and masculinity are wrong. They're immature, they're juvenile - and that's not his fault, but he's going to feel a lot less pressure and a lot less discomfort in himself if he changes those.

[Editorial Standards](#)   [Reprints & Permissions](#)



Find Jeff Conway on [LinkedIn](#) and [X](#).

Follow Author

## Join The Conversation

Comments 0

One Community. Many Voices. Create a free account to share your thoughts. Read our community guidelines [here](#).