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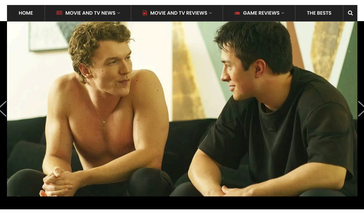

'Heated Rivalry' Season Two Trades Danger for Depth as Creator Pushes Into Darker Emotional Territory

Showrunner Jacob Tierney says the "adolescent" rush of Shane and Ilya's secret romance gives way to the harder work of love — with a spring 2027 premiere in sight

By Naser Nabandian — 1 day ago in Entertainment, Entertainment News, TV Shows

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WEIGHT 100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180 190 200 210 220 230 240 250 260 270 280 290 300

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WEIGHT 100 110 120 130 140 150 160 170 180 190 200 210 220 230 240 250 260 270 280 290 300

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Jacob Tierney, the showrunner behind the breakout hockey romance Heated Rivalry, is taking the story somewhere considerably heavier for its second season — and he is doing it deliberately. Speaking at BookCon 2026 at New York's Javits Center alongside author Rachel Reid, Tierney told an audience of roughly 3,000 fans that the new episodes will inhabit "much more serious territory" as rivals-turned-lovers Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov move from the electric early danger of their secret relationship into the harder terrain of a committed life together.

The show's first season thrived on furtive encounters and romantic suspense, but Tierney signaled that the adolescent thrill of those moments is mostly behind the characters now. "What do you do after the rush of danger is gone and yet now you have to live in a relationship where you still aren't communicating properly?" he asked at the panel. The season will adapt Reid's The Long Game, set a decade after the original novel's events, and Tierney has already privately nicknamed it "Sex Scenes from a Marriage" — a nod to Ingmar Bergman's unflinching portrait of a long-term couple.

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Reid's Role Model, the fifth book in her Game Changers series, will also be woven into the second season, introducing hockey player Tom Barrett and team social media manager Harris Dover. Tierney made clear he plans to push Troy's story into darker places than the book itself goes, calling him "a really damaged guy" and saying the show will dig into that damage harder than Reid did on the page.

To manage the expanded scope, Tierney has brought on Michael Goldbach as co-writer — a notable shift after writing and directing all six first-season episodes alone. Production is set to begin in August, with the show targeting a spring 2027 premiere on Crave and HBO Max. When asked whether the season would cover the entirety of The Long Game, Tierney deflected coyly: "Who said I'm doing it all? There's a lot of material."

The second season arrives off an extraordinary cultural moment. The show became the most-watched original series on Crave and was reported the highest-performing acquired, non-animated debut on HBO Max. Lead actors Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie served as torchbearers during the 2026 Winter Olympics torch relay in Pelino, Italy, underscoring how far the series has traveled from its origins as a Canadian romance adaptation. Williams has also noted that active players across the NHL, NFL, and NBA have privately reached out to share their own experiences of concealing their sexuality — testament to the show's resonance beyond its genre.

Tierney said his guiding principle remains unchanged: take the love story seriously, show that happiness is hard-won, and refuse to pretend the world is less complicated than it is for a queer couple living publicly.

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Jacob Tierney

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