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FAN JOE SHARKS

Sharks Talk "Heated Rivalry", Why Pride Celebration Important

Sheng Peng
Posted on Jan 9, 2026 | 0 Comments

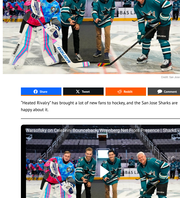
Photo: Sam Jones Photography

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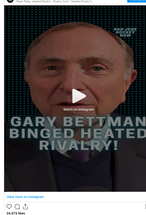
"Heated Rivalry" has brought a lot of new fans to hockey, and the San Jose Sharks are happy about it.

The critically-acclaimed Crave streaming hit, on HBO Max in the United States, is arguably the sport's biggest pop culture moment in the States since 1993's "The Mighty Ducks".

"Heated Rivalry" is the story of Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov, hockey stars who play for rival pro teams, whose secret sexual relationship blooms into a deep love over the course of their careers.



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Well, Commissioner Gary Bettman binged all six episodes of Heated Rivalry AND ... The breakout hockey series streaming on HBO Max and Crave has taken over, blending elite on-ice competition with a deeply emotional story of love, loyalty, and hockey culture. Fans are hooked, the NHL is taking notice, credited with introducing hockey to a broader, more diverse audience than ever before, bringing new fans into the game and expanding its cultural footprint. Safe to say, the hockey world and beyond is taking. If you've watched, what do you love about it?
#HH #HeadedHeard #Glorious #Crave
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"Interest in hockey has spiked because of the TV show," Alex Wennberg said.

"Obviously, it's been a topic around the league," John Klingberg said.

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"When I'm scrolling late night on TikTok," Tyler Toffoli said, "There's a lot of people [saying] it brought them to the game."

"It seems like people have gotten into hockey just because of that show, I can see it online," Adam Gaudette said. "People are trying to learn the rules and what's going on in the game."

"People love the show," Zack Ostapchuk said.

"It's great that more and more people are being introduced to hockey and getting into it," Sam Dickinson said.

None of the San Jose Sharks players interviewed for this story have watched the series in its entirety yet, which just completed its first season. The second season is scheduled for a Spring 2027 release.

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Toffoli and Gaudette said they've watched parts of it, and that their wives, Cat and Micaela, respectively, are big fans.

Cat Toffoli discussed the show on the "San Jose Hockey Now Podcast" recently.

"I'm planning on actually [watching], it," Klingberg said, "but I haven't had time."

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Gaudette pointed out, about the relatively graphic sexual content on the show, "You watch 'Game of Thrones', there's lots of [adult] stuff. If it's a good show, it's a good show."

Watch it or not, everybody agrees that "Heated Rivalry" is great for the game.

"People are talking about it," San Jose Sharks head coach Ryan Warsofsky said, "and the more people we can get excited about the game of hockey, the better."

"Any way to grow the game," Michael Misa said, "it's obviously positive."

"It's something that came out at the right time," Ostapchuk said.

"Heated Rivalry" is just one TV show, but it's a reminder that hockey is for everybody. Another reminder?

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The San Jose Sharks are hosting their 2026 Pride Celebration on Thursday night against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Misa, Gaudette, and Barclay Goodrow say that they plan to wrap Pride tape around their sticks during warm-ups, to show their support.

"If you can play, you can play, doesn't matter," Goodrow said. "None of that matters."

"It's important to support everybody. It's growing the game of hockey," Misa said. "Definitely, I'll be supporting, and I think it's good thing."

"It's a good thing that we as athletes in our platform that we have, can make a difference, and help other people," Klingberg said.

William Eklund agreed. "That's something we gotta do."

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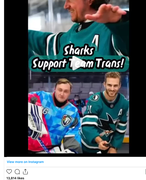
"You just want everybody to feel comfortable in their own skin, right? Be able to walk through the door and feel like, Hey, I'm going to a hockey game, and I don't have to worry about anything else," Alex Nedeljkovic said. "Sometimes, we lose sights, we're just all human beings, and you can treat each individual as a human being."

"Don't care who you are, what you believe in," Gaudette said. "If you're a good person, you belong here."



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In February, the San Jose Sharks hosted drAquatics and @teamtransvolleyball for their fourth annual Pride Scrimmage. Alex Wennberg and Tyler Toffoli were surprise guest coaches!
This continues the Sharks' decade-long support of the Earthquakes, San Francisco's only LGBTQ+ hockey club!
BTT: @teamtransfall23
Also, need what #sarajonesfans players think of "Heated Rivalry" and why supporting Pride matters? https://jonesofficialshop.com/shop-your-sharks-heated-rivalry-pride-collaboration-tees/
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"We're being attacked in a lot of places. No, it's not the entire world against us."
Kara Weber of @teamtransvolleyball spoke on why it means so much to her and her teammates that Alex Wennberg, Tyler Toffoli & drAquatics support and hold their at the #5 annual Pride Scrimmage.
Wennberg and Toffoli and @sajonesmedia also spoke on why it's important for them to get behind Team Trans.
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