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'Heated Rivalry' Producers Drop Hints on Season 2: "This Show Is Not Built on Secrets"

Jacob Tierney and Brendan Brady say the queer hockey drama's second season will prioritize feeling over plot twists — and that the show's devoted fan base already has most of the answers: "I've never experienced fandom like this before."

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH AUGUST 17, 2026 9:29AM



Jacob Tierney and Brendan Brady attend the premiere of "Heated Rivalry" at TIFF Lightbox on November 24, 2025 in Toronto, Ontario. HAROLD FENG



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Heated Rivalry producers Jacob Tierney and Brendan Brady say the queer hockey drama's second season will lean on feeling over plot twists — and that fans already have most of the answers.

The producers behind HBO Max and Crave's breakout queer romance are staying coy on specifics for season two — but not because there's much left to hide.

“What’s so funny about the level of secrecy is like there’s a book — you can just look at it,” creator, writer and director Jacob Tierney said of the Rachel Reid novels, the *Game Changers* series, the show is adapted from. “It’ll tell you honestly, 90 percent of what you’d like to know is in that book.”

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Season one of the series drew primarily from *Heated Rivalry*, Reid’s second *Game Changers* novel, which introduced the story of Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie), two on-ice rivals who develop a passionate, secret, long-term romantic relationship. Tierney also folded in elements and characters from the series’ first book, which centers on Scott Hunter (played by François Arnaud) and Kip Grady (played by actor Robbie G.K.).

For season two, Tierney **has said the show** will continue Shane and Ilya’s story, drawing primarily from Reid’s sixth book, *The Long Game*, which finds the pair now in a committed relationship and learning to build a life together while still hiding their feelings from the public. Season two will also weave in the storylines from book five, *Role Model*, whose plot runs concurrently with *The Long Game*’s timeline. *Role Model* focuses on Troy, a professional hockey player who is traded to the Ottawa Centaurs in Reid’s source material, and Harris, the team’s social media manager. It was **announced earlier** this month that Charlie Gillespie has been cast as Troy, with Justice Smith to play Harris.

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three guesses, and I bet two of them will be right,” he said. “This show is not built on secrets. It’s built on feelings and sensation. It’s a very visceral show. It’s very sensual in that way, and it’s all in the execution of it.”

Tierney is sharing writing duties on season two with Mike Goldbach — whose credits include *Mayfair Witches* and *On Becoming a God in Central Florida* — as co-writer. “Mike is such a good writer, and he’s been so amazingly helpful to me,” Tierney said, “We’re very happy with where we’re at with the scripts. We’re really happy with this cast.”

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He noted that, as with the casting of Williams and Storrie, the new additions were cast “to make sure that we’re putting couples together that we think are going to just shine on the screen.” Some fans of the books have pushed back on the casting, arguing it departs from Reid’s description of Harris as stockier and less conventionally athletic-looking than his book counterpart. Reid has [pushed back on this](#), posting on Instagram: “Thinking about all the people last summer who told me the casting for Ilya and Shane was wrong and bad.”

The show also announced other key season two castings to expand the Ottawa Centaurs roster. Emily Hampshire and Priyanka were also cast in roles which originate from Reid’s third novel, *Tough Guy*, which suggests, as many suspected, Tierney’s plans to incorporate the other novels in the *Game Changers* series. But so far, there’s been no announcement on casting for that book’s lead couple: hockey enforcer Ryan Price and aspiring singer (and hockey hater) Fabian.

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There has also been no mention yet of adding characters or plot lines from *Common Goal*, Reid’s fourth novel in the series. But Kyle Swift, one half of that book’s leading couple, made a brief appearance in the first season of *Heated Rivalry*, played by Matthew Finlan.

Asked what he’s most looking forward to going into the new season, Tierney pointed to trusting his own instincts amid a much bigger spotlight than season one drew. “I’ve never experienced fandom like this before, and I have to just trust myself the way I trusted myself last time,” he said. “I’m gonna try to make the best show I can make — that’s really all I can do. I can never make everybody happy at the same time. I hope I can make a majority of you happy, and I hope you also just cut me the slack to wait and see.”

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Season two of *Heated Rivalry* began shooting this year and is aiming for a spring 2027 release on Crave and HBO Max.

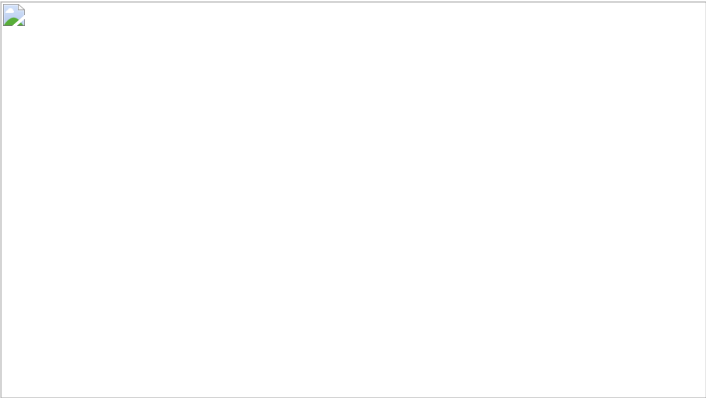
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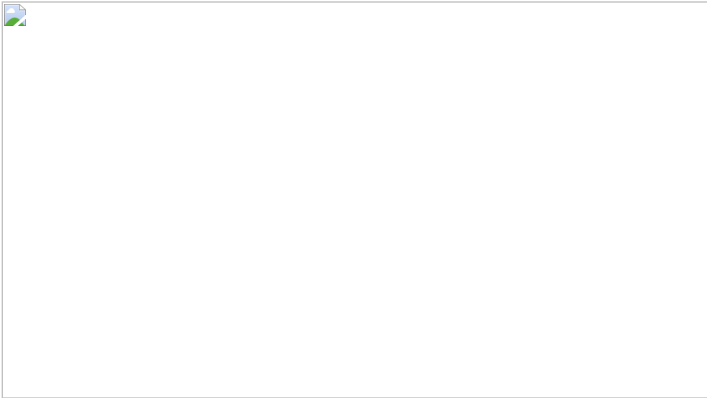
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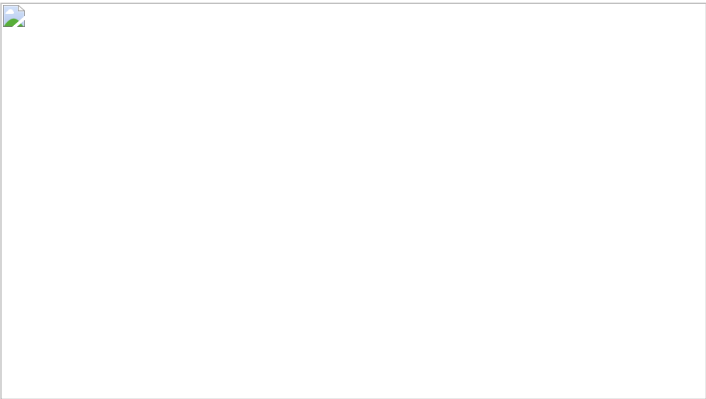
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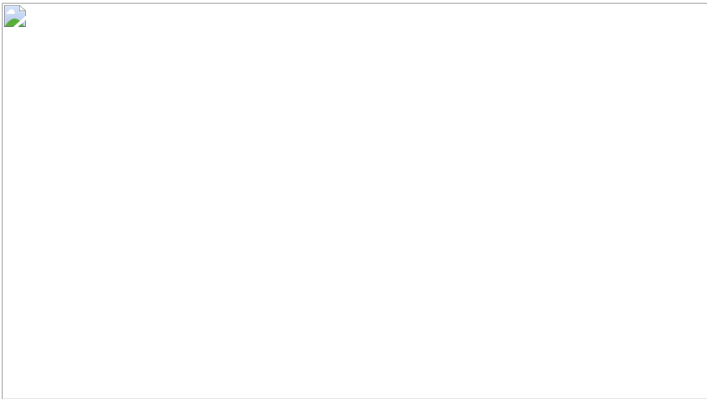
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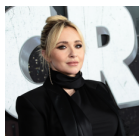
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