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'Heated Rivalry' Creator Slams NHL for 'Toxic Culture'

Jacob Tierney said the league is "not doing what they should be doing to make their sport an inclusive place"

By **Natasha Dye** | Published on October 14, 2026 03:54PM EDT

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Jacob Tierney on 'Radio Andy'; NHL puck on ice.
Credit : Radio Andy/Instagram; Jonathan Kozub/NHLI via Getty

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Jacob Tierney, who created the hit show *Heated Rivalry,* slammed what he described as the NHL's "toxic culture" during an interview with Andy Cohen

Tierney said he believes that the NHL failed to "meet the moment" and "has a lot of ongoing work to do"

The writer and director claimed the league is "not doing what they should be doing to make their sport an inclusive place"

The creator of *Heated Rivalry* had a lot to say about what he sees as the "toxic culture" in the NHL.

Jacob Tierney, who also wrote and directed the HBO phenomenon, slammed the league during an interview on *Radio Andy*, where host Andy Cohen asked about the sport's "incredible" growth. When Cohen said he's "happy that the NHL has met the moment," Tierney, 47, asked, "Have they?" A surprised Cohen responded, "Have they not?"

Tierney plainly replied, "No... The NHL is not meeting the moment." He added, "I think the NHL has a lot of ongoing work to do."

Cohen suggested that Tierney's hit program "handed the NHL a gift" with the increased interest in the sport, but the show's creator fired back, "It's up to the NHL to convince anybody that this is a safe space for people."



'Heated Rivalry' stars Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams at the 2026 Golden Globes.
Credit: Rich Polk/2026GG/Penske Media via Getty

Tierney claimed the league is "not doing what they should be doing to make their sport an inclusive place."

When Cohen asked how the league could do that, Tierney said, "They really need to deal with their own toxic culture, and they're not."

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PEOPLE has reached out to the NHL for comment.

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Gavin McKenna, the first overall pick in this year's NHL Draft, was charged with aggravated assault just months before the Toronto Maple Leafs selected him in June. That charge was dropped. McKenna, 18, is still facing a simple misdemeanor assault charge, along with two summary counts.

In August, a Centre County, Pa., judge granted another continuance in McKenna's case, according to WJACTV. The case appears to remain pending.

In recent years, other members of the league have been accused of sexual misconduct.



Carter Hart leaves court on July 24, 2025.
Credit: Cole Burston/Getty

In 2024, a woman accused Dillon Dubé, Carter Hart and Alex Formenton of sexual assault, along with two other hockey players who are not currently in the NHL. They were all found not guilty by the judge.

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In October 2025, Hart, 28, signed with the Las Vegas Golden Knights. Dubé, 28, agreed to a one-year deal with the St. Louis Blues in July, and Formenton, 27, plays for the Edmonton Oilers.

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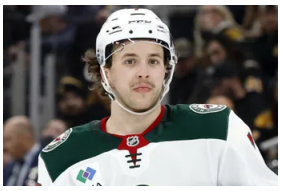
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OD **OddSatin2952** 3 hrs ago

Correct me if I'm wrong, but this guy writes hockey smut and then is offended the league didn't embrace it?