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# Rachel Reid on Upcoming Book 'Unrivaled' and Keeping All Those 'Heated Rivalry' Season 2 Secrets

The 'Heated Rivalry' author is currently on a tour for the deluxe edition of the best-selling hockey romance novel.

BY NICOLE FELL OCTOBER 4, 2026 3:26PM

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Rachel Reid attends The Hollywood Reporter Women in Entertainment Canada Awards at Ritz-Carlton on May 28, 2026 in Toronto. MATHEW TSANG/GETTY IMAGES

*Heated Rivalry* author Rachel Reid has been hitting the road on a book tour for the deluxe edition of the hockey romance novel. She's a bit stressed about it, but not for the reason you might think.

Filming on season two of *Heated Rivalry* — the Jacob Tierney-created show adapted from Reid's *Game Changers* series — is underway. And while the author's been to set, she's trying not to spill any spoilers.

"Going on tour right now is risky because there are a lot of things I can't talk about," Reid tells *The Hollywood Reporter* backstage at her book event in Los Angeles. "It's just been really fun so far, and I think people are happy to talk about the things that they already know about."

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In some ways, things have changed considerably for Reid over the last year after the television adaptation of her 2019 novel, *Heated Rivalry*, became a cultural phenomena. Prior to the show, Reid's fictional hockey universe already had legions of fans — it's one of the things that drew Tierney to the novels in the first place — and the attention on her work has only multiplied in the near-year since the show premiered.

The book and series focus on the complicated romance of Canadian hockey prodigy Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Russian phenom Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie), who are the fierce on-ice rivals and the league's best players. They're the only two characters in Reid's fictional hockey universe to get two books: Her 2022 novel *The Long Game* serves as a sequel to *Heated Rivalry.*

While season two of the show, based mainly on *The Long Game,* looms closer, so does the next chapter in the Game Changers series, *Unrivaled*. The upcoming book, set to be published in June 2027, continues Shane and Ilya's story. Reid can't say to much about that either.

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"I'm sure people have very burning questions they'd like to ask, but obviously I can't talk about it," she says. "But this time next year, we'll have all those answers."

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**It's been a crazy year, obviously. How are you feeling right now?**

I think right now I'm feeling quite excited about a lot of things because there's so many things on the horizon. Season one coming out — even just knowing that there was going to be a show and then it getting announced — all of that was exciting and wild and unpredictable. But the fact that I get to do it again is really cool. Filming's happening right now, and so I can have that to enjoy right now. But then [there's] looking forward to season two being released and also my new book being released next year as well. Right now, there's just a lot to look forward to, and I feel more comfortable with everything now too. Especially [because] I actually know the people making the show now, so it's starting to feel a little more normal.

**Like this is your new baseline?**

Yeah. I mean, it still feels unbelievable every day, but also I think I'm starting to accept it as normal.

**While you were writing again for *Unrivaled*, was there a supporting character that you found a new way in for or a new appreciation this time around?**

I've been writing maybe a little more of Scott Hunter into this book than I have into other Ilya and Shane books. He's more of an important side character, so that's definitely one.

**Where do you think that came from?**

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I just really like the way he interacts [with them], with Ilya especially. I think that dynamic's very fun. I left him in *The Long Game* as maybe having this burgeoning friendship [with Shane and Ilya], and I wanted to play with that. That's one character for sure. I tried to do a little more with Yuna, as well. And, honestly, all of the women. Like Rose and Svetlana, I like to try to include a little more of them into the story. I think a lot of the side characters that are popular.

**With so many more eyes on the books these days, did anything open up a new point of view for you at all?**

Yeah. It's been challenging writing the book knowing how big the expectations are, so a lot of this year has been me trying to not focus too much on that. But I am interested in other people's opinions on what I write. I wouldn't say I made any huge decisions based on what fans are saying, but I try to consider it while I'm writing.

**When into the show starting to air did you kind of realize that something was happening?**

Honestly, when the trailer dropped because people watched it so much. I did a bookstore event, I think it was the day after the trailer dropped, and we played the trailer at the event. Everybody in the audience knew every word of the trailer. I told everyone at the show that, and I was like, "I think this might be a hit." I've never seen people memorize a trailer like this in one day. Definitely that, and when HBO picked it up too, just before it aired, that was a good sign. But I think by episode three it was like, "OK, this is really hitting." Which was only the second week because the first two came out the first week. It was fast.

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**Jacob has often said that from the beginning he wanted to take the books seriously. I assume as the author,**

**that's what you want, right?**

He told me that right away when we first talked about it, that he wanted to take it seriously and he wanted to make it for adults. He didn't want to shy away from the sex scenes, and he wanted to make sure that they were important part of the story, all of it. That meant a lot to me as the author. But also as a fan of romance as a genre, which doesn't get a ton of respect outside of the romance world, it meant a lot.

**How has your relationship with social media changed during all of this?**

I would say the most difficult part to get used to was I can't just post a little flippant joke or really say anything without thinking, "Do I want this to go viral as a headline on a bunch of outlets or social media accounts?" Even on this tour, every event I do, there's quotes being pulled from it and turned into headlines. It's just something to think about. I do have a very dry sense of humor that leans a little dark sometimes, or a little mean. Sometimes I want to make a joke, but then I'm like, I don't know that people will get this as a joke. Or even if they do, when it turns into headline format, it doesn't look like a joke anymore.

**It's has to be a little frustrating then, particularly when you're saying something in context.**

The out-of-context thing is the thing to be the most wary of and just know that it will happen. Just be careful. I've definitely learned that lesson many times this year, and I'm trying to get better. It's just amplified. I went from having, I think it was something like 7,000 followers. Maybe it was a little more than that. I can't actually remember. But now it's, I don't know, over 400,000, which is a lot for an author. There's a huge difference between saying something that 7,000 people are going to see [versus] 400,000, so [it's] something to keep in mind.

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**You have been posting through the editing process. I saw your Instagram story the other day about putting three fingers in a mouth. (*Laughs*).**

That was just a line I came to in one of the scenes. I was like, wait, that's terrible. I'm going to make it two, so when you see that, it's two now.

**There was a thought about three.**

Yeah, originally it was three. I was like, that's too many. Taking it out.

**What made you want to come back to Shane and Ilya?**

I always did, but I didn't want to do it in a cash-grabby kind of way. I wanted to make sure there was an actual story to tell. I originally thought the only way to continue the story would be short stories. I just didn't think there was a full novel there, but this actually ended up being the longest book I've written yet. There was definitely story there. Part of the desire was knowing that the show was about to start filming because it just made me start thinking about them a lot. I was reading Jacob's scripts. It got them back into my head a lot, which got them talking in my head. I started writing early last year, I just started playing around with a few scenes to see how they worked. Before, I was trying to write this Luca Haas book that I had to abandon because Ilya and Shane kept taking it over. I was like, all right, obviously, I want to write about them again, so I'm going to do it.

**I'm still holding out hope for the Luca book.**

I am too. I really hope that a really good idea comes to me. I'm sure it will because Luca's very fun to write to.

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**One of the most interesting things from the show's popularity has been so many people coming to the books and showing such love for these characters, like Luca, who truthfully isn't in the book much.**

No, barely in there.

**They become such favorites and beloved. Has that been rewarding for you? What has that been like?**

In the last few weeks, it's been a real increase in people demanding a Luca book and just generally wanting to know more about Luca. Probably part of that is the casting of Edvin Ryding, who has a massive fan base. That has to be a contributing factor because there's not a ton of him in the books. But I always wrote that character as like, "Hey, would you guys like a book about this guy?" I know I was doing that, so it's definitely my fault. But I think it's neat. There's other characters too. People really love Wyatt Hayes. There's been interest in a book about him or the coach [of Ottawa] — these happily married characters that they want me to break them up. To me, there's some characters that I think maybe have a book of them and some who are just enjoyable side characters.

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