

Hockey's Hottest Couple Speaks Out

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Hockey's Hottest Couple Speaks Out

by [vodka_and_gingerale](#)

Summary

“I think a lot of people have the wrong idea of us,” Shane Hollander says when I put this to him. “Ilya’s nowhere near as combative as he might first appear. He’s a baby, really. My parents adore him. Our friend’s kids love him. And you should see how sappy he is with our dog, Anya.”

“Yes, and Shane is actually asshole,” Ilya Rozanov – Shane’s husband – butts in.

A year after the surprise reveal of their secret relationship, NHL superstars Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov sit down with Vogue to talk hockey, marriage and *that* playoff goal.

Notes

Just a little something inspired by [this](#) fake Vogue Sports Special cover. Takes place after The Long Game, so massive spoilers for both Shane/Ilya books

(edit: looks like that pic has gone, but here's [another version](#))

Disclaimer: I know nothing about hockey and only finished the second book last night, so apologies for any glaring errors!

HOCKEY'S HOTTEST COUPLE SPEAKS OUT

They are the oddest of odd couples. Not because they are both men; they're not the first NHL players to come out, although queer players still remain the exception to the rule. But what sets these two apart is how they – on first appearances at least – couldn't be more different. Shane Hollander is the three-time Stanley Cup champion and Canada's darling; the reliable but remarkable captain, the steady hand at the helm. Ilya Rozanov, on the other hand, is the dynamite used to light the cannons; the spark that sets the fire among teammates and competitors alike. A brooding but mischievous Russian, as well-suited to be the mysterious love interest in a YA novel as he would the villain of a horror story, it's hard at first to see how he and Ottawa's first son could have fallen in love. But fall they did, and hard; this summer marks their first wedding anniversary, as well as their twelfth year together.

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"Yes, and Shane is actually asshole," Ilya Rozanov – Shane's husband – butts in.

Hollander rolls his eyes, but the affection between them is undeniable. It's truly mind-boggling how they managed to keep their relationship hidden for over ten years, playing not only as captains of opposing teams, but as the poster children of the NHL's hottest rivalry.

"There's hockey, and there's not hockey," Rozanov says with a shrug. "When we play, we play to win. Our rivalry was no less real because of our love."

His husband smiles fondly at him, not feeling the need to add anything. Ilya's English may still not be as fluent as he might like, but there is a simple poetry to his words that always hits the back of the net.

I ask them how it feels now to be playing on the same team - Hollander left Montreal for Ottawa as soon as he became a free agent. It's clear that they have both embraced the move; and the end of the travelling that so often kept them apart; but there is a shadow that falls across Hollander's face whenever his old team is mentioned.

"I was incredibly proud to play for Montreal, to be their captain. It was always my mom's favourite team, and leading them to back-to-back Stanley Cups is something I'll never forget. But it got to a point where staying there was just untenable."

They did not respond well to your relationship, I put to him.

Hollander winces, and his reluctance to complain about his former team is clear. "My friends have been great about it. But it was a shock to a lot of people. And I think it would have been difficult to stay there after the Ottawa incident."

The ‘Ottawa Incident’ as he so delicately puts it, refers to Montreal’s seventh-game defeat by the Ottawa Centaurs in last year’s playoffs. The series was most notable for being the first time since their relationship was revealed that Shane and Ilya had played against each other; and for the Rozanov overtime goal that Hollander should and could have saved – if he hadn’t tripped at the last minute.

“I think that was the final straw,” Hollander says, and despite his clear contentment at Ottawa, there is still a tinge of sadness when he talks about the end of his time in Montreal. “Once the fans started questioning my integrity – once my own teammates doubted me – it was hard to go back from that.”

Rozanov is somewhat less diplomatic. “It was fucking bullshit! Ten years we were together in secret, and not once has Hollander let me win. He won three Stanley Cups for Montreal, and still they doubt him.” He sits back, arms folded, before adding once more, and with that undeniable Russian passion, “Bullshit.”

A flush rises to Shane’s cheeks at the force of his husband’s support. “Ottawa has been amazing, though,” he says, tactfully changing the subject. “It’s great to be back in my hometown, and Ilya has always said what an amazing team it is to play for. And he’s right; they welcomed me with open arms from the start, and I couldn’t wish for a better team, better management, better fans. It’s really perfect for us.”

Is it not too much, I ask. Living and working together?

“What is this ‘too much’?” Ilya asks. “With Shane – no such thing.”

Shane blushes again, ducking his head shyly. “People always seem to ask us that; how we manage separating the two. But it’s all we’ve ever known. At home, we’re Shane and Ilya. On the ice, we’re Hollander and Rozanov.”

“Sometimes at home, too,” Ilya says with a suggestive waggle of his eyebrows.

That seems a good a place to leave this as any. It’s clear that these two have reached the limit of the time they can spend in other people’s company, and are keen to return to their home. With all that they’ve given the NHL for the past decade, it’s the least we can offer them.

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