

BY ERICA THOMPSON,
STAFF REPORTER
ethompson@suntimes.com
@Miss_EThompson

On Saturday, more than 50 Jeremy Allen White lookalikes descended on the sledding hill in Humboldt Park to compete for \$50 and a pack of Marlboro Red cigarettes.

Hundreds of spectators cheered and applauded as each contestant stepped forward to show their resemblance to the actor, known for portraying Chef Carmy Berzatto on the Chicago-based show, "The Bear." Many wore aprons, sported curly hair and brought their own cigarettes because his character is known for smoking.

Most of the contestants were white men, but some women and people of different ethnic backgrounds got in on the fun.

There was even a toddler White lookalike.

But the winner, determined by the level of applause, went to 37-year-old mental health therapist Ben Shabad of Glenview.

"I'm so happy," said Shabad, who was given a crown and hoisted into the air in the middle of the crowd. "This is the coolest thing I've done all week."

Organized by Albany Park roommates Kelsey Cassaro and Taylor Vaske, the contest follows several other celebrity lookalike competitions in other states. Earlier this month, there were Harry Styles and Dev Patel contests in London and San Francisco, respectively. And in October, actor Timothée Chalamet crashed his namesake contest in Lower Manhattan.

"People were online saying, 'Why doesn't Chicago have one?'" said Cassaro, who is 29. "And I was like, 'I think it should be Jeremy Allen White if we do it.' And I also think a lot of Chicago dudes look like him."

Cassaro and Vaske, 31, originally planned the Jeremy Allen White event as a joke, posting a flyer on social media and along North Milwaukee Avenue in Logan Square. When the competition picked up traction online, they said they knew they had to make it happen.

The lookalikes included fans of both "The Bear" and White's previous show, "Shameless," which was also filmed in Chicago.

BEARING A RESEMBLANCE

Glenview therapist claims \$50 and a pack of Marlboro Reds for winning Jeremy Allen White lookalike contest

Ben Shabad of Glenview won the Jeremy Allen White lookalike competition Saturday in Humboldt Park.

ANTHONY VAZQUEZ/SUN-TIMES PHOTOS



Michael Dudka (above) was among the more than 50 contestants who competed Saturday in a Jeremy Allen White lookalike competition.

Contestant Michael Dudka, an actual chef, said he began getting attention in public for resembling White before he even knew who the actor was.

"I was kind of frightened when they were running up to me," said Dudka, 35, of Glen Ellyn, who works for Pie Life Pizzeria.

Dudka said he was encouraged to enter the contest by his 64-year-old father, Paul Dudka, who heard about it on the radio and was excited to spend time in the Humboldt Park neighborhood, where he used to live.

"I'm really just here for him," Dudka said of his dad. "We don't get out too much. He wanted to do it, so I said, 'All right, if it makes you happy, let's go.'"

Columbia College Chicago student Claire Filipiak said she entered the contest for the fun of it; after all, she has blue eyes and curly hair like White. And she is a fan of "The Bear."

"I love it," said Filipiak, 20. "There's so many reasons: the cinematography. The story is really good. All the swearing is really fun."

Before the competition began, contestant David Moulin, 26, of Wicker Park, was being coached by his friend, Juan Ortiz, on how to properly hold his cigarette.

"His hair was a lot longer about two weeks ago, so it would have been ideal, but he cut it without knowing," said Ortiz, 25, of the Gold Coast. "But we got the apron. And we had him work out a little bit."

Attendees Josephine Krieger, 22, and Alexis Kline, 20, of Roscoe Village, said they first watched White on "Shameless."

"I love when shows are centered around places that I grew up in," Kline said.

Krieger snapped pictures of the lookalikes with a vintage digital camera, and they both gushed over White's looks.

"He's like a Roman god to me," Kline said.

But for the winner, the flattery was based more on White's talent than his good looks.

"I'm just impressed by his acting ability, and the shows that he's been in have been really good," Shabad said, "so I take it as a compliment that people think I look like him."