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Here come the brides

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The annual Running of the Brides event at Filene's Basement is the superbowl of bridal gown shopping. It is perhaps the only full contact sport that features crinoline and hand-sewn beading.

Brides lined up well before the crack of dawn to be at the Union Square Filene's Basement at 8 a.m. sharp when the doors were flung open and dozens of racks dripping with designer wedding gowns were made ripe for the picking. The all-day event drew over 1,000 brides-to-be from all over the country with its drastic price cuts. Gowns normally sold for thousands of dollars were sold for just a few hundred, a welcome relief for brides drowning in the inflated prices of the wedding industry.

Andrea Lewis flew from California for the event and gathered family and friends from all over the Northeast to help her snag her dream gown. "We have walkie talkies, matching shirts, head bands and I've given them all pictures of the dresses I like," said the well-prepared bride-to-be. She had her eyes on a

strapless, off-white, mermaid gown.

Not everyone in line was a bride, and not everyone had an airtight game plan. Linda Werner was in the part of the line that wrapped around the block and had been standing in line since 7 a.m. for her sister, who arrived at 4 a.m. "I was told to just snatch dresses and look for an orange bandana," said Werner, who was eventually reunited with her sister once the doors opened.

Pam Richardson (soon to be Walker) and her crew of pink tank top-wearing friends also subscribed to the snatch and grab model. "It's better to just grab what you can and sort later," said Richardson matter-of-factly. Because she arrived at 4:30 in the morning, Richardson was waiting in line in the warmth of the building instead of outside on the frigid New York sidewalk.

Where there are brides, there are people who will sell them things. Mercedes Crossfield of Mercy's Creations arrived at 3:30 a.m. in freezing cold temperatures to tempt some anxious brides into purchasing her bridal and baby shower favors and decorations. Other vendors were hawking bottled

water, culinary services and other big day necessities.

Just seconds after the doors opened at 8 a.m., the metal racks were barren and swaying in the wake of running brides



Bride-to-be Pam Richardson (second from right) poses with her friends/helpers minutes before the the doors open for the Running of the Brides. (Demetria Irwin photo)

and helpers. Women looked like lioness hunters, gathering their fresh kill of silk and satin toward their makeshift dressing rooms. Pretty soon, the bargaining is well on its way as brides trade and negotiate with each other for the right size, shape and color. The gowns are put on the racks in no particular order so as to level the playing field. The first size 10 through the door should not be able to

grab all the size 10s, after all.

When the AmNews caught up with Filene's Basement's spokesperson, Pat Boudrot, she was counseling an overwhelmed bride who was ready to leave the event sans bridal gown. "Go grab some coffee, eat something and come back later. Just because someone is first in line doesn't mean she has good taste. It is quite possible to find what you want after the bargaining begins and dresses start being put back on the racks," counseled Boudrot.

Women who found their dream dress all said bringing helpers and making friends with other brides were key elements to a successful bridal run. The Running of the Brides Event began in Boston in 1947. Boudrot calls it a woman's right of passage, a tradition to be passed down. Maybe 30 years from now your granddaughter will use your very same tennis shoes for her Running of the Brides event.