

Gunson of SCRG brought French down the last 70 feet to the base of the cliff. Members of the SCRG and fire department then evacuated him the rest of the way. (Source: Dave Thorson, Summit County Rescue Group)

Analysis

French pondered his move for ten to 15 minutes, recognizing the limits of his ability and that his protection might not hold if he fell. He took the calculated risk and lost. (Source: Dave Thorson, from a conversation with French)

RAPPEL FAILURE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, NO HARD HAT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Colorado, Mt. Royal

On Monday, July 2, the Summit County Rescue Group (SCRG) rescued the second fallen climber in nine days from Mt. Royal.

Ron Swett (21) and two companions, Brian Pence and Terry Tiritilli, also from Dillon, were descending the northeast side of Mt. Royal about 3:30 Tuesday afternoon. They had used a looped flat webbing sling tied with a square knot and doubled around a tree as a rappel anchor.

Shortly after Swett began to rappel on a double rope through the anchor, the square knot in the anchor worked itself loose and the anchor gave way. With nothing to hold the rappel rope above him, Swett fell about 40 feet, landing on his head and suffering severe scalp lacerations and a closed head injury.

After the fall, Tiritilli stayed with Swett while Pence descended to Frisco to get help. Pence went to a residence at the base of Mt. Royal, where the occupants called the Sheriff. Officers Tolbert and Mikesell responded and the SCRG was called out. SCRG arrived at the base area at 5 p.m. and reached the accident site about 800 feet up on the side of the mountain by 5:30 p.m.

Swett was comatose and combative as Bob Arcieri of SCRG examined him. Direct radio communications were established with Dr. Lackey at Summit Medical Center, who advised SCRG members with the victim on treatment.

At 6:15 p.m., SCRG started the scree evacuation to the base of the mountain, and Swett was en route to Summit Medical Center by ambulance at 7:10 p.m. He was later flown to St. Anthony's Hospital in Denver, where he remained in critical condition in the intensive care ward on Tuesday morning. He was well enough to be released, however, by July 9. (Source: Dave Thorson, Summit County Rescue Group)

Analysis

None of the three climbers were wearing climbing helmets, and they apparently did not tie any safety hitches when they tied the square knot that failed. Swett had recently moved to Summit County from Nebraska and had been climbing for about a year. (Source: Dave Thorson, Summit County Rescue Group)

FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE OF NUT

Colorado, Lumpy Ridge

On July 15, Dave Trout (21) and Gary Buckham (19) started climbing a route on the Book, believed to be just west of the Kors route. Buckham had run the rope out as far