

victims sustaining fractures. One uncontrolled snow descent of 60 meters could have been prevented if the victim had had an ice ax—and the knowledge of its use. As noted last year, climbing is on the increase in the Salt Lake area. It is now also a popular haven for sport climbers.)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, OFF ROUTE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Washington, Leavenworth, Castle Rock

As part of the 1989 Seattle Mountaineers Intermediate Climbing Course Rock II field trip, six climbers went to Castle Rock in Tumwater Canyon near Leavenworth on April 4. They were to climb the Sabre Route as part of their course training. There were two instructors and four students. The first climbing team included an instructor, Craig Rowley, and a student, Paulo Albuquerque. The second team was two students, Mike Wessels (31) and Bill Serantoni. The third team was instructor Dan Bean and a student, Steve Fairbanks.

Albuquerque and Rowley climbed the first pitch with Paulo leading. Both climbers were at the belay point on Sabre Ledge when the second team started, with Mike Wessels leading. Before starting, Dan Bean discussed the need to try and protect the first few moves on the route to avoid a six to seven meter ground fall. In starting his lead, Mike was able to place protection that would help avoid such a fall. Mike then moved up to a ledge at the base of the gully that goes generally up and right. He led up through the gully to a small ledge below a slabby section of rock. From where the remaining climbers were standing, it was not possible to see exactly where Mike had placed protection. After compiling information from other people (but not Mike himself), it appears that he placed three Friends to protect the lower portion of the pitch. The last piece was probably near the small ledge below the slab.

From the small ledge, the normal route traverses left about three meters and then ascends up over a flake onto easier ground. Normally, a climber then traverses further left to the belay point on Sabre Ledge. A variation on this route is to ascend directly up from the small ledge using a hand crack in a left-facing dihedral and climbing the slabby section of rock. This variation is described to be harder (5.7 or more). Also, at the top of the slab, the rock gets smooth and “soapy.” However, this is not obvious from the ledge. The rock does appear to be a lighter color, however. From the ledge, the tree stump above the slabby section looks useable as protection, but apparently is rotten and not reliable.

Before anyone noticed, Mike had climbed three meters or so up the slab using the harder route variation. He seemed to be climbing well. Near the top of the slab, he was forced to try and exit left from the crack and make a few moves on the slab to start his traverse left to Sabre Ledge. Apparently, this point on the slab is where the rock gets slippery. In trying to make his exit move, Mike slipped and fell. He came down the slab and past the small ledge. At this point, he was coming down feet first and was looking at approximately a seven-to-eight meter fall. However, his upper protection (a Friend) pulled out. His next piece of protection was probably three to four meters lower. This piece of protection (a Friend) held. The only other lower piece of protection was dislodged by rope movement. Consequently, Mike’s fall was lengthened by about eight meters. Although Mike started falling feet first, he got turned on his right side and fell the final distance sideways. He hit hard on some rock and an intermediate ledge just above the larger ledge at the bottom of the shallow gully. The

rope finally held the fall about a meter above the large ledge. In landing on his side, Mike hit his head and injured his arm. He was wearing a helmet, which probably saved him from a serious head injury. As it was, the right side of his face had contusions, a swollen eye, bloody nose, and a chipped tooth which cut the inside of his mouth. Mike's right arm sustained a compound fracture above the wrist. (Later, the doctors found that his right wrist was also dislocated.) Luckily, although it was an open wound, there was not continuous bleeding. It was also learned later that he had a broken cheekbone.

The first team on Sabre Ledge and a climber on the Cat Burgler route heard the fall but did not see it. After impact, Mike appeared stunned, but was able to move and respond. It took Dan Bean and Steve Fairbanks about ten minutes to rope up, grab a first aid kit and other equipment, and start trying to reach Mike. At this time, Mike was conversing with rescuers and saying, "Hurry, I think my arm is hurt bad." Dan Bean climbed up to Mike from below. Tom Gooch (the climber on the Cat Burgler route) had the climbers on Sabre Ledge drop a rope from above. He used that to descend and traverse over to Mike. At this time, 0905, Gooch sent a man to Levenworth for help. Both rescuers arrived together. Since he was still hanging from the only remaining piece of protection, the first thing done was to anchor Mike more securely. Gooch examined Mike to assess his injuries. Mike was able to support himself. Therefore, he was not moved until his arm was stabilized. Using sterile surgical pads, a foam pad, wire splint, space blanket, runners, etc., Mike's arm was stabilized and then held to his body using runners. The splinting was finished at 0935.

Once the arm was stabilized, a lowering system was set up. Mike mentioned swallowing some blood (from a cut inside his mouth) and maybe feeling sick. However, he did not get sick. By remaining calm, he was a big help in the rescue. About 0945, a deputy sheriff and two paramedics arrived on the scene. After seeing that a lowering system had been set up, the deputy commented that the system seemed under control. Tom Gooch lowered Mike and Dan simultaneously, but on separate ropes. Four Friends were placed as anchors and Tom used a figure-eight in rappel mode to do the lowering. Dan Bean downclimbed a little so that he could remain under Mike, who was going to descend facing out to protect his arm. The lowering went smoothly with Mike being able to sit on Dan's leg during the descent for support. As soon as Mike reached the ground, he was examined and placed in a stretcher by the paramedics.

It took about 15 people 45 minutes to carry Mike to the ambulance in the Castle Rock parking lot. The rescuers belayed the stretcher down the trail with eight to ten people helping to carry it. With so many people involved on the descent trail (which has some loose rocks), a few rocks were dislodged. Fortunately, they didn't hit anyone and cause a problem.

Mike was taken to Cascade Hospital in Levenworth. Because of his arm injury, he was immediately transferred to a hospital in Wenatchee, where he underwent emergency surgery. (Source: Dan Bean)

Analysis

It appears that Mike seriously underprotected the lower part of the Sabre route. From his hospital bed, he mentioned that he was concerned about running out of runners. He may have run the lead out too much for that reason. Mike also commented that he didn't climb very smart. He may not have had much experience placing Friends and that may be one reason why the highest piece of protection pulled out. Further-

more, Mike did not know exactly where the route went and attempted the harder route variation which prompted the fall. (Source: Dan Bean)

INEXPERIENCE, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, FALL ON ROCK

Washington, Icicle Creek

On April 29, 1989, I was assigned to lead three students, Tom Del Carlo (30), Bob Dalby, and Ken Wells, up a multipitch route known as "B & D" on the east side of Wadell's Buttress. The weather was clear, but rain the previous few days had turned the first pitch into a small waterfall. The sound of Icicle Creek made communication at any distance difficult or impossible. I led the first pitch, followed by Dalby. I climbed about one meter to the left of the normal line of ascent on a moderately angled slab that was partially dry. Protection was possible at six meters and ten meters using Friends. (The normal line has vertical cracks that take stoppers.)

Approximately 15 meters from the belay spot, a 1.5 meter step requires one mid-fifth class move. Water was flowing at this spot, though the rock was fairly clean. I inserted a Camalot, setting it three times before attaining good placement. On previous climbs I had used stoppers or hexes, but this time the water discouraged placement. Alternative routes to the left and right were covered with wet moss and lichen. I hesitated a few minutes, as I was unsure how slippery the rock was. I made the move using a hand jam and found the footing acceptable. The remainder of the pitch was fairly dry and unremarkable. Dalby followed me, having only a momentary problem at the step.

Del Carlo led the second team, with Wells belaying, while I belayed Dalby on the pitch above. Yelling down below drew my attention. Wells called that Del Carlo had injured his hand. My thoughts were that he had twisted his hand making the hand jam at the waterfall step.

Del Carlo had in fact followed the same route, placing protection at the six meter level, then had fallen at the step after putting in a Friend, probably in the same indentation I had used. He later noted he had first used Friends two weeks earlier on another climb. This time the device held for a moment and then popped. Wells reported that Del Carlo tumbled a bit on the top part of the slab as he tried to orient himself and began pulling in the rope hand over hand in an attempt to avoid a ground fall. The rope went taut, three meters above the ground, and Del Carlo flipped upside down and stopped 60 cm above the ground. He sustained scrapes and bruises to his legs, back, and arms and numbness in his left hand. His helmet was well scratched up. To his credit, after a short rest, he completed the climb. (Source: Condensed from a report by Dave Shema)

Analysis

The water running down the rock had an effect on the placement and footing. Inexperience with the Friend also was a factor. The helmet likely prevented serious injury. A chest harness might have kept Del Carlo from flipping upside down when the rope became tight. (Source: Dave Shema)