

ICE TOOL PLACEMENT FAILURE, FALL ON ICE, BROKEN ANKLE

Washington, Mount Rainier

At 1400 on July 28, 1991, Cohn Clubine (43) suffered a broken ankle at the 1600 meter level of the Nisqually Glacier on Mount Rainier. John, along with 12 other students and four instructors, was participating in the second in a series of two ice climbing seminars conducted by the Seattle Mountaineers. The first in the series was held two weeks earlier, also at the Nisqually Glacier. Mount Rainier's lower Nisqually Glacier is a popular ice climbing practice area.

The seminar was coming to an end when John Clubine and Mary Evans were climbing a 12 meter section of overhanging glacier ice. An anchor had been established on top and Mary was belaying John through the anchor from below. While climbing, John decided to exit the overhang two to three meters to the right of the anchor. He had placed his first tool over the top of the roof and while placing the second tool, the first tool placement failed. Mary's belay held but since John was to one side and negotiating the overhang, he dropped one to two meters and pendulumed violently. During the fall John's right crampon caught in the ice causing the injury. Mary was able to lower John to a point from which he could exit the glacier escorted by Bruno Reinsys, instructor. Bruno examined John and determined that the injury was limited to John's ankle. John had a folding splint in his pack which he was able to help administer. John indicated that his ankle was comfortable enough that if we assisted him as "human crutches" he would be able to hop, reducing considerably the distance he would have to be carried. Webbing was used to fashion a sling which was then attached to John's seat harness to stabilize his foot and keep it off the ground while he hopped between two assistants. Within 30 minutes the rest of the seminar participants had gathered and evacuation was underway.

Analysis

A review of the accident leads one to the obvious judgment that under the right conditions an ice tool popping out can have severe consequences even when protected from above. "In hindsight," John says, "First, I should have been higher before placing the first tool because my arm encountered the lip which made the placement difficult. Second, placing oneself in a pendulum should be avoided and third, belaying from above would have allowed moving the rope to the line of ascent which would have been superior. However, when you're on the last pitch of the day and clear, blue, plastic glacier ice is overhanging above you, calling out, you go for it." (Source: Fred Julian, Field Trip Leader)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, OVERCONFIDENCE

Washington, Mount Baker

On August 4, 1991, a group of two guides and eleven students walked to an area near the center of the Coleman Glacier on Mount Baker. The ice formed an amphitheater with 30 to 50 degree walls 30 feet high which became vertical for an additional 20 feet, ending in a bulge onto an upper lip. Above the lip were clean, white ice blocks and broken ice walls with water running freely down the ice.

After a demonstration by the guides, the students paired off into five roped teams in five different locations. The students had been advised that the lead climbers should