

## **STRANDED—POOR POSITION, IMBEDDED CARABINER**

### **California, Yosemite Valley, Sunnyside Bench**

On June 18, 1994, Josh Klikna (14) and his two brothers were learning to lead at Sunnyside Bench. Josh fell several times while attempting Raisin, a poorly protected 5.9 route. His last fall, a five-footer about 60 feet off the ground, somehow left him hanging upside down, with the carabiner of the highest piece of protection impaled in the back of his knee and his whole weight suspended from it. He was unable to right himself and dislodge the carabiner.

Eric, a nearby climber, climbed to him, clipping through Josh's protection. He reached Josh shortly after the first rangers arrived, and helped him get upright. Per instructions from the rangers, he did not remove the carabiner from the leg.

SAR team member Lance Allred climbed the pitch to assure that Josh and Eric were secure. He found them both anchored to a single piece, a medium nut in a rotten, shaky placement that had caught Josh's fall. Lance placed several good pieces and linked them together, then instructed belayers on the ground to lower Josh and Eric.

The nose of the carabiner (a Black Diamond Fin) had imbedded itself about 1 cm into Josh's leg. It was stabilized in place and Josh was carried to the ambulance in a litter. A physician at the Yosemite clinic removed the carabiner and stitched the wound. Damage to the leg was superficial.

### **Analysis**

This climb was not the greatest for learning to lead. The first protection was a rusty bolt 25 feet up the pitch and hanging halfway out of the rock, and most of the other placements were not much better. Josh had apparently taken several falls on these pieces before his final one.

Eric had good intentions, but he may have added to the problem by not having the skills and equipment needed. He climbed the route relying on Josh's protection and clipping his rope into Josh's biners instead of adding his own quick-draws. Thus he ran some risk of damaging Josh's fixed rope with his moving rope if he fell. When he reached Josh, Eric was unable to put in additional protection, leaving them both dependent on that single shakey nut. If Josh had been lowered by someone on the ground, even more force would have been placed on the piece. If it had failed, both Josh and Eric would have had a serious, even fatal, fall. (Source: Lance Allred, SAR team member & John Dill, NPS Ranger.)

## **FALLING OBJECT**

### **California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan**

On June 24, 1994, our party began an ascent of the Triple Direct route on El Capitan. That evening, as we bivouacked on Mammoth Terraces, we observed two portaledges set up on the Shield, about 1200 feet above us.

At 2030 we all heard the sound of a falling object. To me it sounded like an incoming mortar round in a war movie. I was lying on my right side inside a sleeping bag at the time. The object, which proved to be a two-liter Pepsi bottle filled with water and covered with duct tape, hit me on the left side near the bottom of my rib cage. The top of the bottle exploded on impact and water sprayed all over the ledge. Although I was in some pain, I felt I was in no immediate danger.

In the morning I still had some bruising and a little pain, but I decided I could con-