

protection for anchoring the top rope. As she leaned over the edge of this lower ledge to gain access to the crack, she felt a “pop” and fell over the edge. She fell 50 feet, hitting several large tree limbs and finally ending up on the mud and scree slope below.

John, who had Wilderness First Responder training, did immediate spine immobilization and checked her airway for breathing as he thought that she had not been breathing for those few minutes. She let out a large gasp of air and was very incoherent in verbal response. John sent his two eldest clients down to seek Ranger and rescue assistance.

Within 20 minutes, a rescue team arrived. Elaine was raised and prepped for a Flight For Life flight to Madison for her injuries. Elaine sustained a separated shoulder with fractures, a punctured lung, and a leg laceration. She was hospitalized for six days, three in intensive care and three for rehabilitation, after which she was released for home care. She admits to not using enough protection and credits her helmet for limiting injuries.

### **Analysis**

Using proper and sufficient equipment is highly recommended. In this case, Elaine used only one piece of protection and attached it to a loose boulder. Perhaps she hadn't placed the protection adequately to prevent a side-loading that may have been put on the piece.

John was happy with his first aid training and stated, “The whole book just flashed before me,” and was glad to be able to help. Whatever mistake was made, Elaine admits to not using enough protection. She is climbing and guiding again, but never gets near the edge unsecured and unroped. (Source: Steven Schaeffgen)

## **FATIGUE—FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

### **Wisconsin, Devil's Lake State Park, Chicago**

Two male climbers (ages unknown) were leading Chicago (5.9) at Devil's Lake State Park. “Josh” climbed the crux of the route but soon after got lost. He spent some time searching for the proper route, and after time his strength diminished and he fell. The only protection on the route was below the crux and the first ten to 15 feet above it was unprotected. Josh had placed a #4 Camalot and a CCH Alien below the crux, and as he fell the Camalot pulled from the route, lengthening the fall.

“John,” below on belay, was approximately 20-30 pounds lighter than Josh. John had been sitting against a tree but was not anchored. As Josh fell, it pulled John from the tree and up to the first, and only, piece of protection about ten feet off the ground.

Thanks to the only piece of protection on the route, Josh stopped short of a full-fledged fall onto sharp pointed rocks. However, it did not stop him from partially hitting these rocks, causing minor injury to his legs, an arm laceration requiring eight stitches, and back pain that left him bearing a large “lump” or welt. They stopped climbing for the day and were both fortunate that injuries were minor.

## Analysis

Both climbers are reported to be experienced and had climbed with each other often. It is also reported that both had just returned from a climbing trip out West. It has been mentioned that they may have been feeling “cocky” from success on western granite and misjudged their abilities on Devil’s Lake quartzite, which is notorious for being “slippery” and can be inherently more difficult than granite due to that fact. The guidebook describes Chicago as “...a bold and heroic lead with serious potential ground fall.” Unfortunately, Josh found that out first hand. Had it not been for the Alien holding the fall, Josh would have hit the pointed rocks at full force from his estimated height of 40 feet.

These two seemed to have overlooked the weight difference between them. In a top-rope situation there may be no danger if one climber is slightly heavier or lighter than the other, but it is a definite concern when leading. Either way, the belayer should always anchor in. (Source: Steven Schaeffgen)

## FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, INEXPERIENCE

### Wisconsin, Devil’s Lake State Park, Resurrection

A climber set out to do a classic route—Resurrection (5.9). Tom was a competent gym climber at 5.10+, but he had no experience leading on rock or placing protection.

Tom had problems finding the route and quickly lost his way and found that it was beyond his lead ability. After route searching for some time, Tom fell. As he fell, his protection, inadequately placed, pulled from the rock, and Tom sustained a 30-foot fall to the ground.

Luckily, there was a doctor nearby who stabilized Tom. Climbers were then sent to get help from park rangers, who arrived in the wrong area, as they had been misinformed by the climbers. The doctor and several climbers had already raised Tom from where he had fallen, so time had been wasted in arrival at the wrong location. The extent of injuries is unknown, but Tom was taken via ambulance to a nearby hospital for treatment.

## Analysis

Assuming that climbing in a real rock environment is remotely related to gym climbing can be very costly. (Source: Steven Schaeffgen)

*(Editor’s Note: We are pleased to have a new correspondent from this part of the climbing world—Steven Schaeffgen—who also offered the following:*

*It should also be stressed that there are many accidents every year at Devil’s Lake State Park, Wisconsin. However, most of the accidents that happen on or around the rock bluffs and cliffs are non-climbing related and do not involve climbers. The bluffs at Devil’s Lake State Park are accessible via many trails and offer exposed views of the lake and surrounding area. Unfortunately, many visitors are injured every year by getting too close, “messing around,” and scrambling around boulders and bluffs. People usually get hurt because they get into a climbing situation without experience.*

*There were many cases of broken bones, lacerations, and head injuries not involving*