

freezing rain and it made him a little uncomfortable, so he put the helmet on early, an action he gave true thanks for after he cracked it on the slide.

They started post-holing up that gully. About ten feet into it, TP hit the “sweet spot” and set off the whole thing. He estimated the crown was about 12-18 inches deep and approximately 50 feet wide. As soon as it fractured, they were gone. TP tried to run towards the cliff but was immediately overrun and sent head-first down into the talus. By the time he stopped he had slid somewhere between 50-100 feet. His partner slid approximately 200 feet. He quickly realized that he was OK, experiencing just some serious bruising. He found his partner after he was able to clear his throat and mouth of snow and was able to access his situation, he claimed to be OK, but really “beat up.”

As TP put it “we just both put our heads down and marched, slid, crawled and groaned our way back to the truck, an event which you can probably recreate in your imagination.” They went to the hospital where DR was diagnosed with with three fractured vertebrae and a bruised kidney, among other assorted ailments not as serious. TP didn’t go to the hospital. It took him about a week to recover to 100 percent.

Analysis

Awareness is everything. Many people don’t perceive this area as a possible avalanche slope, but it has done so in the past. It almost got alpinist John Bouchard, and several years previously Jared Ogden was caught in one in the same area and injured his back. On this day the conditions were right for the slope to let go, and it did.

If the climbers had been pinned or buried, it might have been a day or two before anyone realized what had taken place, due to the time of year and lack of climbing traffic. Canon is a true alpine environment and should be treated with respect. (Source: Al Hospers)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

New Hampshire, Saco Crag, Roadside Attraction

On Saturday, May 31, a first-season leader and his partner were starting up Roadside Attraction, 5.9+ on Saco Crag, north of Cathedral Ledge. The leader used a nut as his first piece to protect the opening crux moves and had fallen onto the gear several times. The belayer was securely anchored to a large tree at the base of the route, situated over a steep and exposed slab that drops off to the base of the cliff. A nearby climber saw the falls and advised the leader that his nut placement had shifted and he should put in a multi-directional cam to protect the crux. The leader was satisfied with the gear he had and made another attempt to climb, but this time his fall pulled the nut out. Apparently he fell onto his back and slid approximately 15 feet down the slab, where his belayer caught him. His belayer or a bystander tied off the lead rope to the tree using an overhand (non-releasable) knot.

A local guide and friend arrived at the cliff to find one EMT and one climber on the slab holding a backboard under the victim. The assisting

climber was tied onto a tree above, but the EMT was not. They could not lower the victim to the board due to the fixed knot on the weighted lead rope, and they could not set the board securely under the victim. At this point, the victim was complaining of considerable pain from hanging in his harness. The guide lowered a free end of the rope for them to tie to the victim's belay loop and secured it to an anchor on the tree using a Munter hitch. Once the victim was lifted several inches, enough to release the fixed knot, they were able to lower him onto the backboard. For carry out, the victim was secured to the backboard, and Mark set an anchor on a tree above the steep trail down to the road. The guide fixed a rope to the backboard and belayed them down the trail using a Munter knot on the tree. The victim was met by a waiting ambulance, was transported to Memorial Hospital, and released later that day, since his injuries were apparently fairly minor.

Analysis

The leader later acknowledged that he had so far lead nothing harder than 5.7 prior to trying Roadside Attraction!

Tying the victim to the tree with a fixed knot rather than a releasable knot caused much of the confusion on the scene. It is unclear to me why Mountain Rescue Service was not called for this accident, considering the high angle and technical complexity. Had Mark and I not happened upon the scene, it could have taken much longer. (Source: Al Hospers)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge, Recompense

In October, on the third pitch of Recompense, my partner, Mark, was ten feet from topping out and went to plug a cam and popped off. He was 15 feet above his last piece, so with rope stretch fell about 35 feet and hit the small ledge about 15 feet above the belay stance. It was immediately apparent that his arm/wrist was badly injured, but all other digits intact. No head injury and he was coherent. We lowered him down (shouting the whole way that a 911 call wasn't necessary, but those who saw his fall were pretty freaked out).

I lowered off and we walked out, then drove to the ER. He broke his wrist in three places and dislocated the bones in his palm. He spent two hours in surgery getting pins put in.

Analysis

It was totally obvious that his pride was hurt more than anything. He's an experienced climber and has led Recompense four times and never fallen. This goes to show that just because you have a climb wired doesn't mean you should run it out 15 feet when there's good pro. We were lucky that it was just a broken wrist.

I was very impressed with our climbing community that day. Everyone on and around the prow came quickly to our aid and organized a clean descent. Anyway, that's the scoop. (Source: From an e-mail to Al Hospers from Holly.)