

on big wall routes. He had also observed the practice himself many times among other parties climbing near him on the Nose.

Scola's prior experience plus his faith in both of the failed placements underscores the importance of backing yourself up. This isn't a case of a beginner misjudging his protection, nor is this strictly a big wall mistake. It can, and does, happen anywhere. YOSAR has seen several cases of "solid" cam placements failing, even under body weight, with serious injuries and deaths resulting.

Clipping the rope through the directional at the belay was a very smart move. It didn't shorten the fall by much, but it allowed Scola's partner to deal with the force of the catch as an upward pull with his bodyweight helping him instead of yanking him downward and possibly off his stance.

Both climbers get gold stars for wearing their helmets. Scola's helmet was six months old and undamaged prior to the fall. Afterward, the energy-absorbing liner was ruptured in the back and crushed in front. That helmet almost certainly saved his life. (Source: John Dill and Keith Lober, Rangers)

## **OVERDUE, VARIOUS FALLS ON ROCK, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, PARTY SEPARATED, INEXPERIENCE**

### **California, Mount Shasta, Mud Creek Canyon**

On June 24 at 1800, the Siskiyou County SAR was notified of a missing 25-year-old female. She had left her partner at 13,600 feet and continued to the summit alone. He waited for her to return but she did not. He became cold enough that he decided to descend and wait for her at Lake Helen. When she still didn't return, he called 911. A California Highway Patrol (CHP) helicopter was used at last light to search for her and was unsuccessful. Due to low light they terminated the air search. USFS Climbing Rangers hiked up from the trailhead in the dark to search for her and other Climbing Rangers searched other likely trailheads on the southeast and east side of the mountain where missing Avalanche Gulch climbers often end up. All Climbing Rangers finished their searches at 0130 on June 25. At 0630, the search continued with the CHP helicopter, USFS Climbing Rangers and Siskiyou County SAR. At 0830 a call was received from a logging camp on the southeast side of the mountain where the missing climber had arrived.

She was interviewed in the hospital. She said that she had reached the summit, made contact with one of the USFS Climbing Rangers and then descended off-route onto the Konwakiton Glacier and below into the steep cliff section in Mud Creek Canyon. She fell several times while descending, receiving multiple bruises and a fractured left arm. She continued down to the lower falls and then climbed out of Mud Creek Canyon and huddled next to a log for the night. The next morning she continued descending until she hit a logging road and later found the logging camp.

### **Analysis**

She had climbed Mount Shasta once before but had no other mountaineering experience. She had no helmet, no ice ax, and no crampons—only “yak trax” on lightweight boots. (Source: Eric White, Climbing Ranger/Avalanche Specialist)

*(Editor's Note: This is one of many cases we see each year in which a biker finds him or herself in a climbing situation. We do not count these as climbing accidents.)*

## **FALL ON SNOW—FAULTY USE OF CRAMPONS**

### **California, Mount Shasta, Avalanche Gulch**

On July 3, a climber fell near The Heart in Avalanche Gulch at 12,500 feet while descending and stuck his crampons into his calf, receiving multiple deep puncture wounds. A USFS Climbing Ranger at Helen Lake made contact with the climber at 1400. The climber refused assistance and descended on his own.

### **Analysis**

An ice ax and crampons are great tools for snow and ice and recommended on all routes on Mount Shasta. However, we see puncture wounds every year due to improper use. One should get some training before using these and continue to practice. (Source: Eric White, Climbing Ranger/Avalanche Specialist)

## **STRANDED, OFF ROUTE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT—LEFT ROPES BEHIND**

### **California, Yosemite Valley National Park, Washington Column**

On July 15, two climbers (22 and 20) were attempting to climb the Prow on Washington Column. They decided to retreat from the wall after reaching the top of pitch six. After an attempt to rappel their route, the pair concluded that a retreat down the Prow would be too difficult due to its angled nature. They instead decided to rappel straight down onto what they believed to be the Ten Days After (TDA) route. Neither climber was familiar with the TDA route.

It is believed that the climbers committed to the TDA route at the top of pitch five. The climbers were apparently aware that the TDA route below their position was overhanging. They believed that the descent could be completed by tying their climbing ropes together and rappelling a single strand to a ledge system above the actual base of the wall, since they felt they would not be able to reach intermediary anchors due to the overhanging nature of the wall.

The first climber rappelled with the haul bag. At the very end of the rappel line, he discovered that the ropes were not long enough to reach a stance or an anchor. So he was left hanging at the end of the rope dangling slightly above the desired ledge system, which is still around 100 feet above level ground. He decided to attach his etrier to the bottom of the rope and down-climb to