

third option is a second rope, which has many other uses in an emergency, including the ability to descend El Cap routes anchor-to-anchor.

Eric said, “We were shooting for a one-day ascent, but my decision wasn’t due to haste, and I definitely wanted to be safe. The distance across seemed short, and I thought I had enough rope to just put the bight through the let-out biner. I never even thought about untying the end from my harness for more distance. Even when I ran out of rope partway across, I consciously estimated the swing would only be 10-20 feet. When I let go I was confident and I remember thinking, ‘I can run this out’. I just made a mistake in judging the swing.”

Finally, Skiy made this medical observation: “I learned that I don’t want to position myself below a heavily bleeding patient!” (Source: Eric Ruderman, Skiy DeTray, and John Dill, NPS Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HELMET

California, Yosemite Valley, Church Bowl

On August 31, Tomoki Shibata (22) led Church Bowl Tree, a 5.10b crack, belayed by Hiroki Kishi. Shibata left his helmet at the base of the climb because the route was only one pitch long. From the ground up, in this order, he placed a camming device, another cam, a stopper, and a third cam. The stopper dislodged as he was climbing.

Details are sketchy, but when the stopper fell out, Shibata apparently realized that a single piece stood between him and the ground, and we think he decided to go for the bolt anchor several feet above. His feet were about 40 feet above the ground when his left hand-jam slipped out and he fell. His top piece pulled out under the force of the fall; he hit the ground on his feet and then tumbled over. The rope came tight just as he hit, absorbing some of the energy of the fall.

Shibata was carried 100 yards to the ambulance, examined at the Yosemite Medical Clinic, and released after treatment for a head laceration, a fractured right wrist, and a fractured left thumb.

Analysis

Shibata had four years climbing experience, mostly on bolted face climbs up to 5.11a. He had been climbing cracks and traditional routes (placing protection on the lead) for about six months prior to the accident. Church Bowl Tree, a popular, accessible, and relatively difficult climb, is fairly easy to protect, yet it has been the scene of various miscalculations and ground falls. Belayers should watch for these situations on any climb and not be afraid to encourage inexperienced leaders to protect conservatively. If not sure of a placement, double it up. (Source: Aaron Smith and John Dill, NPS Rangers, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT

California, Idyllwild, Suicide Rock

On September 5, Trevor Mathews (21), suffered significant head trauma and remains in intensive care. His friend and climbing partner, Claire McKay (22), was treated and released but will undergo facial reconstruction surgery to treat a fractured cheekbone. She also broke her arm and has severe bruising, some caused by being pelted with hail as she lay unconscious on a ledge.

In accounts after the accident, relatives, rescue workers, and fellow climbers say Mathews and McKay began their climb Saturday under near-perfect conditions and clear skies. They took the Captain Hook route up the cliff, which, despite its name, is regarded as a relatively safe and easy climb. Both are said to be experienced climbers who train at an indoor facility. Both were wearing helmets. They were on the second phase of their climb when Mathews, who was about 40 feet above McKay, slipped while trying to set a wedging device for his rope, according to McKay's father. A second device securing the rope to the rock pulled loose and Mathews fell. McKay was on the same rope and was slammed into the face of the rock and knocked unconscious when the rope pulled taut as Mathews plummeted.

Phil Sanchez and his climbing partner Richard Magner and other climbers scrambled to help. They called 911 and secured Mathews in a stretcher that was on-site, with Magner taking off his shirt and using it to pad Mathews' head. They were carrying him out to the road when Idyllwild and Riverside County firefighters arrived. He was taken by helicopter to Riverside County Regional Medical Center.

As rescuers turned their attention to McKay, the sky began to darken. Sanchez and Magner decided they would climb the cliff face to get to her. As they made their ascent, the rain and hail began, first the size of BB's but soon growing to the size of grapes. Magner, who remained shirtless, was being cut by the hail. Rescue workers planned to use a helicopter to lift McKay off the cliff but had to abort the mission when the storm blew in, Idyllwild Fire Department Capt. Alan Lott said, "We were notified by the pilot of the helicopter that he could no longer see the nose of his ship."

Sanchez and Magner climbed to an anchor point about 25 feet above McKay, set their rope and then rappelled down to her. By that time she was conscious and responsive. Sanchez then rappelled to the bottom and secured the rope so that McKay, despite her injuries, could rappel herself down, with Magner following. "I was capable and fully confident to help her out, so I was going to do it," Sanchez said. "It wasn't even a question of what the weather was like. It was, 'Someone's in trouble and I'm going to do everything in my power to help this person out.'" Getting to McKay took about half an hour, in Sanchez's estimation, and getting her down took about 45 minutes. Once she reached the bottom, rescue workers put her