

climbers never stated that a 70m rope would not be long enough for the route. It's a popular, 3½ star route, so I would have thought if there were any descending issues that they would be noted. Having said that, the length of the route should have given me the information I needed. The route itself is 130 feet long, thus requiring 260 feet of rope. My 70m only measures 230 feet. Even with rope stretch, it still isn't long enough. Unfortunately, I didn't pay attention to route length before heading out. From now on, knots will always be placed in rope ends and route length will always be on the top of my mind. (Source: Edited from a report by Chad Mauer, Castle Rock, CO)

FALL OR SLIP ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION – RUNNING ROPE THREADED THROUGH WEBBING, WEBBING FAILED

Colorado, Vail, Rigid Designator

Late on the morning of March 21, Christopher Boratenski (31) an experienced climber, was climbing the Rigid Designator (WI5) a single pitch, 115-foot ice climb with two companions when he fell.

His climbing partners Oscar and Charlotte Fors had climbed the route the day before and used an existing tree-anchor at the top of the climb. After leading the climb, Oscar backed up the existing anchor, a steel carabiner in red 1/2-inch webbing backed up by a sling of black 1/2-inch webbing, with a 5mm spectra cord. Oscar rappelled down on double rope and Charlotte followed the climb on top-rope using the steel carabiner with the two back ups as anchor.

On the day of the accident, Chris led the route and used the existing anchor at the top of the climb, but failed to include the steel carabiner, leaving the rope threaded through the black 1/2-inch sling and the 5mm spectra cord. He rappelled off on a double rope (2 x 60m, 9.8mm ropes). Charlotte climbed using one of the ropes as top-rope. After approximately 80 feet of climbing, the angle decreases leading up an additional 20 feet to the anchor. Charlotte stopped climbing at this point and was lowered to the ground. Oscar tied in and climbed to the same point where Charlotte stopped and was lowered to the ground. Chris tied in and climbed again. As Charlotte belayed, she noticed a slight "stickiness" in the rope, but considering ~150 feet of rope is out and the rope seemed to be moving well, she continued to take.

Choosing the partly overhanging right side of the fall, Chris hung on the rope to rest twice on his ascent. He topped out at the same height as the previous climbers and was lowered a few feet before the anchor failed, causing him to fall straight to the ground not touching the icefall on the descent. He landed flat on his back approximately 20 feet below the belay stance, then bounced off the ice pyramid at the base of the ice-fall coming to rest an additional 15 feet farther down. He regained consciousness after

about 30 seconds and had severe difficulty breathing. With the help of two other climbers, Chris' position on the slope was secured to the backboard (from rescue cache on site). On advice from the 911 operator, we agreed not to move Chris down the slope to the road (ten minutes steep downhill walk) until additional help arrived. The first paramedics arrived 30 minutes after the 911 call, with additional rescuers arriving over the next hour. The Vail Fire Department, Eagle County Ambulance District, and Vail Mountain Rescue Group personnel, used two 600-foot ropes to lower Boratenski down the steep slope. He was then pulled by snowmobile and transported to a waiting ambulance, which brought him to the Vail Valley Medical Center. Chris was checked into the ER in Vail three hours after his fall. He sustained critical injuries, including broken ribs and nose, punctured lung and nine crushed/broken vertebrae.

Analysis

The accident could have been avoided by using the existing steel carabiner in the anchor system. While the anchor would have been adequate for rappelling on double rope, webbing should never be used for a running rope. The repeated climbing and lowering sawed through the black sling and the 5mm spectra cord failed to back up the already running rope. The cut surfaces on both the sling and the cord were burned.

All three climbers were skilled and experienced ice climbers. Chris knew how to set top rope anchors, but considered only the double rope rappel when setting up his initial rappel after leading the climb and did not consider that it may be used as a top rope anchor. The other climbers might have asked for specifics about how the anchor was threaded when Chris came down from his initial rappel, or if either of the two other climbers had checked the anchor when they reached the top of the climb on their respective climbs, then the accident would likely not have occurred.

This fall would likely have had a fatal outcome had it not been thanks to the proximity to the road and Vail's excellent care facilities. Thanks to the Vail Fire department, Mountain Rescue, Vail Valley Medical Center and the supporting climbers for making the evacuation successful. (Source: Oscar Fors, mountainproject.com)

FALL OR SLIP ON ROCK, ROCK FLAKE CAME OFF, PLACED INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, West Ridge

On April 13, my climbing partner Dave and I (Scott Bennett, 23) were psyched to be out in Eldo. Our destination was the West Ridge-Sidewall area, my favorite cragging hangout in the canyon. After warming up on Court Jester, I felt ready to get back on my goal: the Unbroken Chain