

left to get back on to the main crack. When I reached the main crack, I was not feeling very good about the amount of pro I had in and I was anxious to get in another piece before climbing higher. I had difficulty finding a placement. I wasn't comfortable continuing the climb without more pro, so I decided to down-climb. It turns out that being a confident 5.7 climber doesn't translate into being a confident 5.7 down-climber. While I was traversing down and to the right, back towards the blue cam, I slipped. The cam pulled out, and the two nuts were too low to catch me, so I hit the ground. I sustained an ulna fracture at the elbow and a fifth metacarpal fracture, but I was otherwise fine. Michelle made a sling for my arm, we hiked out, and she drove me to the hospital.

Analysis

Several mistakes were made that led to this accident. The biggest mistake was leading a route that was not well protected as a beginning trad leader. I knew from my research online that the route was not easily protected, but I decided to climb it anyway. My second mistake was that I didn't turn around earlier when I had trouble in the beginning finding placements. My third mistake was clipping the cam's integrated sling before changing the direction of the climb, instead of clipping a runner. It's possible that rope-drag could have caused the cam to walk and the placement to worsen. My fourth and fifth mistakes were overestimating my down-climbing abilities and not practicing down-climbing frequently enough while top-roping. (Source: Sent in with no last name)

INADEQUATE BELAY, CLIMBER LOWERED OFF END OF ROPE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT – ROPE TOO SHORT

Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon, Highlander Crag

On December 20, 2009, a 35-year-old man climbing with his girlfriend fell 20 to 25 feet. They were climbing in Clear Creek Canyon on Herb-a-Veg-A-Matic. Joe Pierzchala, climbing on a nearby route, witnessed the fall and gives this account:

The climber was being lowered after having led the route, draws still in place. Suddenly he was free falling! After lowering my partner, we observed the climber tied into his end of the rope, but that the belayer's end was now 35-40 feet up the route. We concluded that the climber was lowered off the end of the rope. We checked the guidebook, which indicated that the route was 102 feet in height, and concluded that the party must have been using a 50m rope. The fall distance corresponds to the distance a 50m rope would have come up short. The fallen climber landed on his back, narrowly missing a very large rock that could have caused more serious injuries. It appeared that the climber did land on a smaller rock, however, which likely caused injury to his back/pelvis/hip.

Analysis

Climbers are encouraged to: 1) read the guidebook re: the length of the route; 2) know the length of one's rope; 3) make sure one's equipment (rope, protection, etc.) is sufficient to climb the chosen route; 4) tie a stopper knot in the belayer's end of the rope, tying into the rope or tying off the end of the rope; and 5) ensure better communication between partners. Two other important ingredients are research and experience.

Clear Creek Canyon is well known as a predominantly sport climbing area developed for use with 60m ropes and is also well known for having a number of routes that require a 70m rope. Using a 50m rope in Clear Creek Canyon is a major oversight on equipment selection. (Source: Joe Pierzchala, Denver, CO)

(Editor's Note: There was one fatality in the Boulder Falls area in September but there are not enough details to provide a full narrative. What we know is that a man (40) fell while being belayed on the route Empor. Neither the climber nor belayer was wearing helmets. We think this might be yet another case in which the belay rope is not long enough and it goes through the belay device.

Another fatality was reported by Tim Kline on Mountain Project web site. Kline and his partner were climbing Lovers Leap when they spotted a body at the bottom of the cliff. The unidentified free-solo climber had been dead for a day or two. No further information was available, but the key ingredients—climbing alone and unroped—warrant reporting here.)

FOOTHOLD BROKE OFF – FALL ON ROCK

Idaho, City of Rocks National Reserve, Castle Rock

On May 21 at 11:45 a.m., volunteer camp host Dottie Cross (63) broke a foothold and fell while attempting to lead the upper pitch of “One For Matt” on Castle Rock. Her climbing companion, Duane Ackerman (62) of Elba, Idaho, lowered Cross to his belay point at the 100-foot level. She was convinced that her right lower leg was broken.

Ackerman rappelled to the ground and utilized Cross's park radio to call for help. The climbing ranger and two-trail crew responded from nearby Bracksiecks Pillar trail and base called 911 to request an ambulance at 12:15. Five additional park staff responded to help.

Upon arrival at the scene, the climbing ranger ascended the first pitch with a Mini Traxion Pulley self-belay on Ackerman's line, trailing an 11mm low stretch rescue rope. Dottie Cross was found hanging in her harness from the anchor chains. She was alert, oriented, smiling. She stated her right lower leg was broken but not in excessive pain. She denied any other injury and adamantly refused helicopter transport.

A vacuum splint was applied. The ranger the tandem rappelled with the patient to the ground, with a fireman's belay from below. She was placed