

FALL ON ROCK, PRE-EXISTING CONDITION**Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Redgarden Wall**

On Saturday, September 25 Maria Petzolt (26) dislocated her shoulder unexpectedly while pulling on a hold on the fourth pitch of Ruper (5.8), a 6-pitch route on the Redgarden Wall. Maria had dislocated the same shoulder five weeks earlier on another outing. Her male climbing partner lowered her to a secure position a few feet lower and called 911 on his cell phone. When rescuers arrived, they administered medication and reduced the shoulder after a few attempts. Ms. Petzolt was tandem-lowered to the base of the wall. She refused an ambulance and was transported to a hospital in a private vehicle. (Source: Steve Muehlhauser, Park Ranger, Eldorado Canyon State Park)

Analysis

Many people have a pre-disposition to spontaneous shoulder dislocations. If a climber knows about this, he or she can compensate by taking care on how far to reach and how much leverage to exert. (Source: Jed Williamson)

FALL ON ICE/ SNOW, CLIMBING UNROPED, POOR CONDITIONS**Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Taylor Glacier**

On October 16, a party of three started up the Taylor Glacier. The Taylor Glacier is a 40–60 degree 1,500-foot permanent snowfield in Rocky Mountain National Park. Two weeks prior, James Patrick (54), the leader of the group had attempted the route and turned around due to poor snow conditions and black ice. Also, it would have been hard to ignore the late season conditions that exposed much loose rock and dirt inside the couloir. Now, the glacier was partially covered with ten inches of snow that had fallen 5 days prior. It was the first measurable snowfall of the year and did not bond well to the existing layer of black ice nor did it do more than barely cover up the loose rock and dirt. Starting up the route at first light and climbing unroped, the first 1,000 feet of the route went easily as they were able to stay in the main couloir and avoid sections of black ice and loose rock. At this point, the party took a break and discussed options: to continue in the main couloir and climb the steep headwall or break left on a weakness that appeared to be easier.

The party chose to follow the left line because it looked easier. Encountering a few short steep steps, one member of the party felt uneasy, and another member belayed her using a long piece of webbing. The going became a little slower as the party had to navigate around patches of black ice and carefully cross steep sections of loose rock that were covered with only a few inches of snow.

With the group's only rope in his backpack, the leader of the group chose to continue soloing the final steep headwall before exiting onto the ridge. As he climbed the 50–60 degree headwall that was covered by patches of

black ice and unconsolidated snow atop of dirt, he slipped. He slid about 30 feet before disappearing out of view. The two remaining climbers anchored themselves to the wall using two ice screws and an ice ax and used a radio to call for help. The party reported that they were stuck, "...fifty to 100 feet from the top," and that their partner had taken, "...a fall of at least 200 feet." Within a few hours, Rangers were able to assist the two climbers to the safety and determine that the leading climber had fallen 1,500 feet to his death.

Analysis

The two climbers made a wise decision to stay put and wait for help after their partner's fall. Many climbers choose to solo this type of alpine terrain because it is "easy" and finding anchors can be time consuming. This, like most classic alpine terrain, is not difficult, but it can be dangerous. Although recently improved, the route was still in very poor climbing conditions. The poor conditions also attributed to the fact that protection was not easily available, thus negating the use of a rope. The snow climbing guidebook that the group consulted notes itself as "A Guide for all Seasons" and lists this route, along with other similar objectives in Rocky Mountain National Park, as best from "summer into autumn," and lists October as the best time to climb. In a normal year, climbers encounter black ice and loose rock on most of the park's permanent snowfields from late August to October. These are some of the least desirable times to snow climb and previous trips along with a visual analysis of the day's conditions should have clued the climbers into the fact that conditions were not ideal, as their guidebook stated. (Source: Rich Browne, Emergency Services Coordinator, Rocky Mountain National Park)

STUCK RAPPEL ROPE, FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT – BOOTS **Colorado, Boulder Canyon, Bihedral Wall**

Beth M. Davis (52) fell while trying to retrieve a stuck rappel rope after climbing in Boulder Canyon on October 31. Davis and her partner were rappelling on the Upper Bihedral Wall. Once on the ground, they began to pull the rope. The rope became stuck on a spot roughly halfway up the rappel route. Davis scrambled up the rock to free it, and in the process fell approximately 20 feet. She suffered a broken arm and possibly a broken shoulder and internal injuries from the fall. Rocky Mountain Rescue Group was able to stabilize and evacuate her. She was transported by helicopter to St. Anthony's Central in Denver.

Analysis

Ms. Davis comments on her accident: "The main thing I want to say is that wearing my helmet was the smartest thing I did that day. I have no spinal or head injuries. In retrospect, I made several mistakes. I knew my shoes were very inappropriate for hiking much less free climbing. I did not adequately