

FALL ON ROCK, ROPE SEVERED BY CARABINER **Kentucky, Red River Gorge, Midnight Surf Wall**

In early September, an experienced climber (age unknown) on Tape Worm (5.12d) took a lead fall from a point between the first and second bolt. His rope ran from his belay, through a quickdraw hanging from the first bolt, to his harness. On this particular route, the first bolt is located high enough that he would not have decked under normal circumstances. Unfortunately, when he fell, his rope was completely severed by the lower carabiner on the quickdraw attached to the first bolt, and he did deck. He sustained head injuries and is on his way to a full recovery.

Analysis

The quickdraw in question is comprised of two Trango carabiners marked: “Trango Italy.” The CE 0638 rating on each ’biner is 24 kilo-Newtons in line with the spine and four kilo-Newtons perpendicular to the spine. (This is the older style classic wire ’biner made in Italy—not the newer design made in Korea.) The two ’biners are connected with a Petzl dogbone (strap between the two ’biners) rated at 22 kilo-Newtons. The quickdraw was removed from the first bolt of “Tape Worm” shortly after the accident. It was found to be intact and operable, but the two ’biners were severely worn by the actions of a climbing rope being pulled through the bottom ’biner and the hanger bracket grinding away on the top one. It is not known who hung this quickdraw or when it was hung. The carabiner in question was never intended to be permanently hung on a popular route and expected to withstand numerous leader falls. Sand-laden ropes serve as a very effective abrasive cutting tool and can wear down lightweight aluminum carabiners in a relatively short period of time. Quickdraws have been left hanging on several overhanging routes in the Red, as well as other climbing venues, over the years by developers and climbers. There are no routine inspections of hardware performed on Red routes. Climbing visitors are warned to trust *absolutely nothing* they find fixed to climbing routes. Check fixed gear before committing to it! If a ’biner is grooved and (most of all) sharp, take it off the route and replace it with a new one!

Follow-up: All quickdraws having aluminum carabiners have been removed from climbs in Muir Valley and new stainless steel PermaDraws (by Climb Tech) have been installed in their places by volunteers. (Source: Rick & Liz Weber, from a post on redriverclimbing.com)

FALL ON ROCK, NO HARD HAT **Kentucky, Red River Gorge**

As is usually the case, Breakfast Burrito (5.10d) had a line of climbers waiting for it on June 6, and when she finally had a chance, CL (age unknown) took her turn on Breakfast Burrito. CL and another member of our group set

up, stick clipped the first bolt, and then I came over and put CL on belay. I stood just to her right, at the base of the wall under the first bolt. She started up the route, hung the second draw, repositioned, and as she reached for slack to clip, her left hand slipped off of her hold and she came crashing to the ground. She landed on her back on a flat boulder, her head just at its edge. Her eyes rolled back in her head, she seized, and only moments after impact, a stream of blood flowed from the back of her head!

With a nurse on site CL was stabilized until the ambulance arrived. Most improbably, she sustained only a minor laceration and sizable bump on her back and some lingering head and body aches.

Analysis

There are several precautions that could have been taken to prevent such an accident: stick-clipping the second bolt, spotting the climber, belayer being prepared to take in a lot of slack in a hurry by jumping off of something, first and second bolt being located nearer to each other. In retrospect, I wish CL had a helmet on her head, that I had been spotting her, and that the second bolt had been stick clipped. Any of these things could have made a serious difference, but the procedure we followed is typical, and the one I most often see being followed by others at The Red. Almost everyone knows the dangers of clipping the second bolt, including CL, and her hand slipping was unexpected. As she said, she was not excessively nervous or pumped.

This has been a lesson to me to never climb something, or allow someone else to climb something, if there is a potential for a ground fall, because there are always factors for which one cannot account. (Source: From a post on www.redriverclimbing.com)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE BELAY, DISTRACTION

Kentucky, Red River Gorge, Military Wall

A large group was gathered at Military Wall on September 12 playing music, possibly loud enough to make communication between climber and belayer difficult. Climber was getting into the upper knee bar on Reliquary (5.12b) when he fell near the last bolt. The climber landed on the belayer's dog, killing it instantly.

The belayer was holding the GriGri in her right hand with fingers over the cam-gri preventing it from locking and said she didn't know how it could have happened. Worse yet, she said this was the third time it has happened to her.

Analysis

Crags are becoming more crowded and distractions occur. Music, dogs, kids, cats, bears, etc. Pay attention to the climber! That person's life is in your