

BD #2 nut, in a bottleneck six feet or so above the roof.

At this point the climb thinned out into a featureless face route for the remaining 15 to 20 feet of the climb. From the beta I had on the route, I knew to the left of my route was a route a grade harder and to the right was a route two grades harder, so I figured the path of least resistance was the route I was on. I continued up and slightly to the left where I saw the most features. As I continued up, more features became apparent on the rock, and after climbing through the majority of the blank face, I came to realize I had split off onto the route to my left, a full grade harder and more run-out than my anticipated route. I stayed calm and took a quick look around, eyeing what looked like a fairly deep three-finger pocket at the very edge of my reach that, if I could get a hold of, would get me through the run-out section to good protection above me. Realizing I had no other options, I committed to the hold hoping for the best. The hold was much shallower and more sloped than anticipated—not enough for my pumped out fingers to clinch onto.

The first 12–15 feet of the fall was air. I began to think everything was going to end smoothly until I realized I was passing my last piece. Remembering the low angle slab below me, I braced for impact. Initially I landed square on my right heel, then fell sideways and onto my left side.

After explaining what I did wrong and how I got off route to my partner, I sat down near the base of the climb for a while until my partner led the correct pitch and cleaned the gear. With their help, I limped down the short approach trail to the Blue Ridge Parkway and waited by the side of the road for my ride. The damage: a fractured heel bone, a cracked rib, and plenty of scrapes and bruises, but I live to climb another day.

### **Analysis**

Always climb within your limits and, though I didn't hit my head, wear a helmet! (Source: Will Chirico)

## **FALL ON ROCK, ROPE PULLS THROUGH BELAY DEVICE**

### **North Carolina, Hawksbill Mountain, Linville Gorge Wilderness**

On September 20, AG (26) and AA (30) were climbing at the “Fischesser Wall,” a little known sport climbing area on the upper wall of Hawksbill Mountain located on the eastside of the Linville Gorge Wilderness. AG was leading a 5.8+ climb with AA belaying. They were using a 60-meter rope and were both wearing helmets. The topo of the climbing area notes the climb is 100 feet long, making a 60-meter rope adequate. AG climbed it clean and was being lowered by AA. AG was cleaning the bolt closest to the ground and asked AA how much rope she had left. He replied it was fine. At 2:45 p.m., just after AG cleaned the last piece of gear, AG was lowered off the end of the rope and fell to the ground.

The bolt was about 25–30 feet off the ground. She and eyewitnesses (BG and CM) believe the fall was 15–20 feet. She landed on her tailbone and rolled backwards five feet down a small slope on to her left side. She complained of pain in her lower back, buttocks, and left hip. She tried to stand and immediately felt nauseous and that her legs couldn't support her. It became clear to her climbing partners that she would not be able to walk out.

At 3:03 p.m., CM called the North Carolina Outward Bound School (NCOBS) to report the incident. NCOBS sent a total of 15 staff to assist in the carry-out. Burke County Rescue arrived with one Paramedic and three volunteers just as OB staff were completing the packaging of AG in the litter. In the field, paramedics started an IV for fluids and gave AG a total of six mg of morphine over a two-hour period. Initial evaluation suggested severe bruising and abrasions, but no spinal damage or fractures. Later, AG was informed that a piece of small bone at the bottom of the sacrum was broken.

### **Analysis**

The 60-meter rope in use belonged to BG, who had climbed the same route using the same rope on a number of previous occasions without incident. The position of the belayer in relationship to the route (uphill or downhill) may have played a role in the length of the rope, in this case shortening it by 20 feet. To prevent incidents like this from happening, belayers need to get into the habit of tying into the end of the rope and either placing a knot at the end of the rope or securing the end of the rope. (Source: Edited from a report by Julie Springsteen, NCOBS)

## **FALL ON ROCK, ARM LACERATED BY CARABINER**

### **North Carolina, Pilot Mountain State Park**

On September 25, Bennet Harris (30) and Tom Drewes (34) were climbing Arms Control (5.11c). Tom was about to pull the final roof. I was watching him climb extremely closely as I intended to climb the route and wanted to see what he did.

He placed a 48-inch sling on the last bolt he clipped at the roof and a 24-inch sling combined with a quick draw to extend it on his second-to-last bolt. Because he had climbed past a smaller roof, a lead fall should have put him in the air. I watched him lean out to grab the jug beyond the big roof. His hand looked a little shaky as he reached for the hold, leaning far back from his stance under the roof. I remember thinking, "If he's having trouble reaching for that, I'm really going to be in trouble."

At this point he fell, and stopped about eight to ten feet below where he started, in mid-air. (Four feet of this was due to the sling). It did not look like a bad fall; it looked safe and his belayer caught the fall with no problem.

It was about a full second before he yelled and we saw him looking at