

FAILURE OF NUT, FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE BELAY

California, Yosemite Valley

In early October 1982, two climbers were on Pancake Flake when the following incident occurred. The leader placed one piece for aid, then a second. He took out the first and was standing in the second, while making a third placement, when the second one pulled out. It was about three meters above the belayer. The leader fell, hit the belayer and continued on. About one meter down, the belayer was pulled off belay. Their injuries included a fractured foot but they climbed out on their own. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

The belayer's tie-in was slack and he had not clipped the lead rope through anything at the anchor. The belay device was a figure eight. (Source: John Dill, SAR Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

STRANDED, INEXPERIENCE, DARKNESS, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

California, Yosemite Valley

On November 11, 1982, Ranger Gary Colliver was the incident commander on a night rescue, which began about 1900, to bring two stranded hikers out of the upper portion of the Gunsight between the Lower and Middle Cathedral Rocks. Damon Pagan (21), Randy Davey (21) and Dean Sberna (21) were invited along on a "hike" up the Gunsight by two more experienced climbers (both 21) who had done the route and descent several times and knew the terrain involved well. The two climbers knew that Pagan and Davey had no previous scrambling or hiking experience; Sberna had some. The climbing in the Gunsight is rated as 5.6 and the area is considered dangerous by climbers because of the high probability of rockfall. The climbers did not carry any ropes or technical equipment. The last pitch is the most difficult section, primarily because of its length and exposure. A fall from any of the pitches could result in death or serious injury. Pagan and Davey were "talked" up the first three difficult sections but refused to do the last pitch after making an initial attempt. Because of their lack of experience, the route below them was too difficult for them to climb down without a rope; they were stuck.

At 1715 an SAR effort was started to remove the stranded hikers. Three Rescue Site climbers and four park service employees participated in the rescue. Weather conditions and the late hour of the report called for a full response. The SAR effort removed Pagan and Davey from the point where they were stranded and a late night walk out was started. At 0130 on the following day, the SAR team, along with Pagan and Davey, stopped for a bivouac in Cathedral Spires Gulch. With daylight, the team made its way down. (Source: Gary Colliver, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

Due to their complete disregard for the personal safety of the hiking party, the dangerous conditions forced upon the hiking party, and the resulting SAR effort, the two climbers were cited in court for their actions. (Source: Michael Mayer, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)