

FALLING ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, RAPPEL FAILURE, BAD WEATHER

Colorado, Hallet Peak

On August 29, 1982, David Dangle (23) and David Miller (24) were climbing the Northcutt-Carter route on Hallett Peak. While they were doing the second pitch, a severe rainstorm hit and they were forced to retreat. They found a large rock horn with several slings wrapped on it and, after testing the soundness of the anchor, decided to use it for a rappel anchor. Miller, who rappelled first, went about 20 meters to a ledge and waited. Dangle then started his rappel; when he had gone down about six meters, he looked up and saw the entire rock horn falling out. Dangle fell about six meters, hit a ledge, bounced off it and fell onto another ledge. Meanwhile, the rock horn tipped 180 degrees, fell and landed top first in the dirt on another ledge, where it imbedded itself. The slings and rappel rope that were still attached to the rock eventually kept Dangle from falling more than 50 meters to the base of the wall. Dangle and Miller continued their descent without assistance. Dangle sustained a deep laceration to his knee in the fall. (Source: Charlie Logan, Rocky Mountain National Park)

Analysis

Perhaps the presence of several old slings resulted in the climbers making a less critical judgment of the anchor than they otherwise might have. Many of the "standard" descent routes all over the continent have old slings, bolts and pitons in place. Treating each as if it had never been used before is recommended. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING ALONE

Colorado, Crestone Needle

On August 31, 1982, the body of Matthew O'Connor (24) was recovered from Crestone Needle, from which he had fallen a few weeks earlier. On August 12, with only an extra sweater, he had set out to ascend four 4600-meter peaks in the Sangre de Cristo Range. No further details are known. (Source: News clipping sent by Freddie Carter from Pueblo, Colorado)

FALL ON SNOW, CLIMBING UNROPED, NO HARD HAT, INADEQUATE FOOTWEAR

Colorado, Crestone Needle

On September 11, 1982, Duane Best (22), a Western State College student, fell more than 80 meters to his death while ascending Crestone Needle with a companion, Geoffrey Bogar. Although they had climbing equipment with them, they were not using it. Best was climbing in tennis shoes. (Source: News clipping sent by Freddie Carter from Pueblo, Colorado)

Analysis

Two other fatalities on Crestone Needle occurred in October 1982. Over the past five years, there have been at least six fatalities and several accidents and incidents on this peak. The *Guide to the Colorado Mountains* by Robert M. Ormes describes the

routes on this peak in ways that do not alert the potential climber to the consistent hazards of changing weather and patches of snow that are, at times, hard packed or situated where one might not expect to encounter them, especially late in the summer. This can be a deceiving area, particularly for the uninitiated. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

Colorado, Thatchtop Mountain

On November 13, 1982, Paul Braun (24) and Doug Walker were ice climbing on the east side of Thatchtop Mountain, above Mills Lake. They had finished one pitch of steep ice with no problems. Braun, who was leading the second pitch, had worked his way up a steep section, over a difficult rock headwall and back onto steep ice. By this time, Braun was about 25 meters above Walker and about 15 meters above his last protection—a Friend. He stopped on ice to contemplate placing another anchor and his feet shot out from under him. He fell back down the ice, became airborne over the headwall and slammed back into the ice before Walker could arrest the fall. The Friend anchor held. Braun's legs and arms felt fine but his back hurt and his muscles were quickly becoming stiff and sore. He was able to downclimb and walk out under his own power with some assistance from Walker. (Source: Charlie Logan, Rocky Mountain National Park)

Analysis

Although Braun was wearing Lowe Footfangs, he does not place any blame on this equipment. He had an ice hammer hanging from his right wrist but it was not placed. He had an ice ax in his left hand with only slight placement. Braun thinks the cause of the accident was human error. The angle of the ice had eased off and Braun had let his concentration on his footing ease off as well. (Source: Charlie Logan, Rocky Mountain National Park)

BAD WEATHER, EXHAUSTION, OFF ROUTE, CLIMBING ALONE, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT

Colorado, Thatchtop Mountain

On December 16, 1982, Michael Dorsey (24) left the trail head for a solo ice climb in the Thatchtop-Powell area. The weather conditions were marginal but Dorsey decided they were not bad enough to turn back. He successfully climbed a 260-meter, high-angle snow field and topped out on the Continental Divide in extremely poor conditions (80 kph winds, blowing snow, freezing temperatures and very poor visibility). Battered by high winds and with his eyelids freezing shut, Dorsey attempted to descend Thatchtop Mountain until he ran into very difficult terrain. During the attempt, he twisted and injured his knee. He then decided to turn back and find an easier descent route. Without realizing it, he began descending the opposite side of the Divide, toward Grand Lake. He dropped down into the North Inlet drainage, thinking he was in the Loch drainage, and kept moving all night. In the meantime, he broke through a snow bridge over a stream and soaked his