

I yelled and asked what kind of belt was holding his chalk bag on. He replied, "Nylon webbing tied with a square knot." Thus we found out that he was a novice and had never tied in to a real belay.

Not to trust his web waist belt, we had him tie the rope end around his waist with three wraps and a square knot, with "lots of wraps" around the ends. This was all he could understand. Upon gaining confidence of the anchor from below, he climbed up a meter and clipped into a fixed bolt. He rested long enough to be lowered off the bolt to the ground. Our rescuer followed, and he cleaned the route. (Source: Pierre Bustanoby)

Analysis

The victim, age 25, is one of many novices stranded and/or benighted in Joshua Tree this year. As has been mentioned before, this area attracts people with little or no experience because of its easy access. (Source: J. Williamson)

FALLING ROCK

California, Mount Whitney

On July 29, 1989, Rob Weingruber (22) and Walker White (23) were climbing the East Face route on Mount Whitney. They had reached the Grand Staircase (about 1500 meters below the summit) when Rob was struck on the helmet and back by a basketball-sized rock. The rock had been dislodged by the rope of a team climbing above them. The team whose rope had dislodged the rock quickly climbed down to help. They found Rob unconscious. While bringing Walker up to their level, Rob regained consciousness. He complained of back pain and was bleeding from the mouth. It was decided that Rob may have suffered a broken back and internal injuries. Walker stayed with Rob while the other two climbers went for help. It was later determined that while Rob would have a sore head and back for a while, there were no significant injuries, but the rescue team was pretty concerned in the meantime. Rob still needed assistance to reach the summit, which was provided by CLMRG and others. (Source: Dennis Burge, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group)

Analysis

This is a popular route with lots of parties so everyone must be more careful. Rob would have sustained much more severe injuries had he not been wearing a safety helmet. (Source: Dennis Burge, China Lake Mountain Rescue Group)

FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING SOLO, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, INEXPERIENCE

California, Yosemite National Park, Cathedral Peak

On August 22, 1989, Pat Teague at the Valley SAR cache received a telephoned report of a climbing accident on Cathedral Peak. According to the reporting party, Christopher Wear (44), his companion, identified as Yohosame Cameron (20), had fallen about 20 meters and suffered a head injury and an injury to his lower right leg. Wear reported that Cameron's leg was "hanging by a thread."

Ranger Hargis was in the vicinity of Crane Flat in the Toulumne ambulance. Hargis

went to the Crane Flat heliport and was flown to Cathedral Peak. Because of high winds and impending darkness, the ship could not land and Hargis returned to Crane Flat.

Four members of the Toulumne Meadows rescue team, and Rangers Beardsley and Koegler hiked to Cathedral Peak and arrived at 2300. Another three rescuers left the Cathedral Lakes trailhead at 2230, and eight additional rescue personnel from Yosemite Valley left the trailhead at 0200. The weather forecast for the following day indicated the possibility of high winds. It was not certain that the victim could be evacuated by helicopter. Consequently, equipment and personnel necessary for a lowering and carryout operation were at the scene.

Ranger Beardsley, Park Medic, rendered medical assistance. The following morning a rescue helicopter from Lemoore Naval Air Station flew to the scene and, with a break in the clouds and diminishing winds, was able to winch the victim from Cathedral Peak at 0900. (Source: Joanne Gill, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

Analysis

An interview with Christopher Wear, the reporting party, indicated that he was climbing with Richard Ludwig (25) and victim Yohosame Cameron. According to Wear, he and Cameron were “free-solo” climbers and had never used ropes. Wear said that he had been climbing three or four years and he thought that Cameron had been climbing two or three years. Wear said that Ludwig had been climbing for three years and sometimes used ropes, but on the day of the accident, the party had no climbing equipment other than shoes. Wear reported that the party had started climbing the 5.6 route on Cathedral Peak that morning at 0900, and reached the summit about 1700. Wear said that he, Ludwig and Cameron were descending the northwest side of Cathedral Peak and free climbing small blocks and arêtes on their way down. Cameron fell while attempting to climb a block. Ludwig stayed with Cameron while Wear ran down the trail for help. According to Ludwig, he, Cameron, and Wear were “autonomous,” widely separated, and not really climbing together since they had no need for ropes. (Source: Joanne Gill, Ranger, Yosemite National Park)

FALL ON ROCK, ROPE CUT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION

California, Yosemite Valley

On September 2, 1989, Manuel Afonso (24) suffered multiple fractures when he fell approximately 12 meters to the ground from the Outer Limits climbing route (I, 5.10a) at Cookie Cliff. An interview with witnesses revealed the following details.

Rubio Rocabert led the first pitch of Outer Limits. The anchor at the top of the pitch—about 35 meters above the ground—consisted of two bolts side-by-side, each with a hanger and two lap (chain-repair) links. Rubio clipped a separate nonlocking carabiner to the lowest gap link of each bolt and clipped a short (38 cm) sling between the two carabiners.

Escorihuela Imagrina wanted to climb the pitch with a top-rope belay. Rubio decided to belay him from the ground, so he tied two ropes together and clipped them through the right-hand carabiner. He could rappel on these ropes and then belay Rubio with the same setup.

Guillermo Garcia and Josetro Rodriguez were planning to lead the route after Escorihuela finished. Afonso wanted to photograph them from above, so before rappelling, Rubio fixed another rope to the anchor for Afonso to climb. To do so, Rubio