

LOSS OF CONTROL OF GLISSADE, OFF ROUTE, POOR POSITION

British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Narao

S.C. and K.D. set out fairly early on June 21, 1994, to climb the north ice gully on the east face of Mt. Narao (2974 meters), and reached the summit at 1630. The leader, K.D., was the more experienced, and decided they would descend a steep snow slope off the west side of the summit. He was first onto the slope and started to glissade, but lost control when he started a small wet avalanche, and slid over some rock bands. He rapidly gained speed, and slid about 200 meters before stopping at the edge of a 25-meter vertical cliff. He sustained broken ribs, a punctured lung, and severe bruises to the right leg and hip, as well as minor lacerations to the head and scalp. S.C. descended to him and they spent the night near the accident site. On the morning of June 22, S.C. started down to get help around 0930. He had to descend about 100 meters of broken technical terrain before reaching steep scree that leads to the forested lower slopes of Mt. Narao.

Yoho National Park Warden Office received a call at 0830 on June 22, from K.D.'s wife, reporting that K.D. was overdue on the climb. Park wardens checked the trailhead and scanned the mountain by telescope. They found fresh tracks up the ascent route and felt the climbers had reached the top. At 1115, wardens who were flown in to view the route at close range found the descent tracks and followed them to the victim, who waved but did not move. Rescuers reached him by helicopter sling, and were told that S.C. had gone out for help. K.D. was given first aid, immobilized, and evacuated to an ambulance at the lower Lake O'Hara staging area for transport to hospital.

During the helicopter's last flight out from the accident site, S.C. was spotted on a large snow patch, and also evacuated, in good condition.

Analysis

The two climbers were well off route on their descent, and in very steep avalanche terrain. In fact, they did not know the normal descent route. That, combined with the very warm day, which made glissading difficult and increased the avalanche hazard, contributed to the accident. The victim had had two major climbing accidents before this one. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

STRANDED, LOST EQUIPMENT, UNFAMILIAR WITH TERRAIN

British Columbia, Rocky Mountains, Mount Wiwaxy

"Grassi's Ridge" is a 5.7 multi-pitch rock climb on the Wiwaxy Peaks (2704 meters) near Lake O'Hara in Yoho National Park. On July 14, 1994, S.L. and G.W., experienced climbers from Britain, set off at about 1100 to attempt this route, and at 2000 they reached a good belay station two pitches from the summit. They were not sure they could finish the climb before dark, and were contemplating a bivouac on the mountain. As they were about to start the next pitch, G.W. took off his pack to get the water out of it. When he set the pack on the ledge, it rolled off and fell into a gully 300 meters below. This left them with no survival or bivy gear, food, water, or their guide book on how to get down the descent route, just the T-shirts and pants they were wearing, and some technical climbing equipment. They started shouting for help, and campers and hikers at the nearby lodges heard them almost immediately.

The Yoho National Park duty warden was notified by interconnect phone patch from Lake O'Hara Lodge, and at about the same time the Lake O'Hara district warden also heard the shouts, and radioed in to the main office. Two parties of wardens with rescue

equipment reported to the Lake O'Hara staging area, where a helicopter was used to sling one of them to the climbers. S.L. was calm, although upset, and was transported to the staging area first. Then a second rescuer was slung up to G.W., who was emotionally agitated, and evacuated him as well.

Analysis

The couple were not familiar with the route or with the Rockies type of climbing. They followed the guide book *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, and expected the climb would be easy, straightforward, and fairly short. Instead, they found the rock loose, the routefinding complex, and the climb long. (Source: Terry Willis, Yoho National Park Warden Service)

FALLING ROCK, FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO TEST HOLD

British Columbia, Northern Selkirk Mountains, Sorcerer Peak

On July 27, 1994, D. Jones (45) and P. Kendrick (40) were climbing on the north flanks of Sorcerer Peak (3166 meters) near the northern boundary of Glacier National Park, looking for new routes. They decided to climb a steep rock and snow couloir to the crest of a ridge. About 1245, after climbing several hundred meters, Jones decided to cross the couloir to gain the final rock, and stepped across to reach a waist-level ledge on which a boulder of about 0.2 cubic meter rested. He merely touched the boulder, but it immediately slid toward him, hitting him just below the waist and pushing him over. Jones fell some four meters with it before he stopped, and the boulder continued down the gully, brushing Kendrick, who did his best to evade it.

It was immediately obvious that Jones was injured, with massive muscle spasm in his lower back and thighs, which made it difficult for him to stand, but he immediately decided to try to get up to the top of the ridge as quickly as possible. With extreme difficulty and the assistance of a belay from Kendrick, he climbed 100 meters up snow to reach the ridge crest (2630 meters), where muscle spasm prevented any further lifting of his legs. Getting into a comfortable position, he urinated to get a further assessment of injuries, and saw evidence of blood.

Kendrick left for help at 1335, and contacted officials of Glacier National Park at 1700. Due to fire-fighting operations in the park, a helicopter was immediately available. National Park wardens Dafoe and Polster were on board at 1720, and the machine reached the site of the accident about 1745. The victim was evacuated by sling to a nearby meadow, where he was assessed by a paramedic from Golden Ambulance before being flown to hospital in Golden at 2000.

Jones' injuries included a fractured pubic bone, internal bleeding, and several bruises and contusions on his lower back and legs. Kendrick suffered bruised ribs and minor lacerations.

Analysis

Although climbers naturally tend to trust the stability of a large rock, Jones realizes he should have been more careful in approaching this one, as it was resting on a wet and sloping surface. The climbers had flagged their route through the bush; that helped Kendrick to return to their vehicle quickly. Also, Jones' decision to move to the ridge crest, as well as his bright-colored clothing, greatly facilitated the rescue, but in retrospect he suggests that a larger party would have provided a better reserve for more difficult circumstances. (Source: E. Dafoe, Glacier National Park Warden Service, and D. Jones)