

Then he was off, up the crack, but about a meter before the split, he felt he should get a piece in, for no particular reason, though he felt secure and would be able to place another one a bit higher. Unfortunately, he didn't have what he needed, and had to climb down twice before he got it right—a 3.5 Friend. Right beside the first bolt, he had to choose between a bomber flexy Friend or a so-so #8 nut, and decided on the nut, as he might need the Friend a little higher up. He placed the nut, then climbed easily through the crux to the spot for the #7 DMM. With his left hand on a hold, he placed the nut, set it, then he pulled up rope and tried to clip in, but fumbled the 'biner. He tried again, missed, and felt his hand slip a bit. He needed chalk, but could not reach it, so he got a better grip on the hold and went for the clip a third time.

Less than a meter below the top anchor, at 1235, his hand popped off the hold and he was on his way earthward! Out of the corner of his eye he saw his #8 nut flapping in the air. He should have used that flexy Friend after all. Strange feelings rushed through him as he realized he was about to hit. His feet hit first as the rope came tight. Then his back hit, flat on the smooth rock, and was not injured. Luckily, his head did not hit, as he had no helmet. He ended up hanging inverted at eye level to Mike, who lowered him a few more feet to a ledge. Brian's feet were obviously in bad shape, and Deborah, a nurse, cut his new climbing shoes off them, while Mike went for help. In the next three hours the Fire Department evacuated Brian, and the ambulance took him to hospital.

He had only a hairline fracture in the right foot, but his left heel was splintered, and the bone between it and the ankle was "shattered into a powder". Also the left ankle and foot had torn ligaments. After five days in hospital, he went home in two casts and a wheelchair, and is recuperating, with hopes that the broken bones will fuse and he will be able to climb again. (Source: Brian Merry)

FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, PITON PULLED OUT Ontario, Little Blue Mountain

On June 18, Bruce Stover (19), Sherri May (18), John Rothwell (23), Kip Brennan (15), and I (Shawn Shea, 30) arrived at Little Blue Mountain about 1:00 p.m. to do some top roping and lead climbs. Bruce was leading a 5.10 climb called "A-Okay" that he had completed on other occasions. I was belaying another lead climb 30 feet away. Bruce seemed to be moving at a steady pace and had just clipped a pin a few feet before the crux. As he was attempting to pull through the crux, his footing slipped and he fell, pulling out the pin, 45 feet to the ground, landing in between a number of large boulders. All members in our party immediately rushed to the victim's aid and found him conscious and able to communicate. Two others in an adjacent party ran ten minutes to the local O.P.P. detachment where a rescue squad was called for.

It was determined that Stover had leg and possible pelvic injuries, and so he was secured to a board and passed over the talus by the evacuation team. He was then walked out to a field beside the highway where a helicopter was waiting to transport him to the nearest hospital. He was later listed in stable condition with a broken femur and fractured pelvis.

Analysis

Bruce is a very experienced local climber, and like many other climbers in the area, routinely clips into fixed protection with an assumption that it is bombproof. Many local routes are protected by pitons and quarter-inch bolts which may be very dated and not routinely checked. Although a visual inspection of the pin would indicate that it was not

very old, its placement had probably not been checked that year, and as such this should serve as a reminder: **ALWAYS BACK UP FIXED GEAR.**

The parties involved are grateful for the efficient evacuation, and say that since such accidents are rare in that area, it proves the effectiveness of rescue training with the local emergency units. (Source: Shawn Shea)

RAPPEL ERROR—ONLY CLIPPED INTO ONE ROPE, NO BELAY, NO HARD HAT

Ontario, Milton, Kelso Conservation Area, “Jolly Rodger” Route

Two climbers, S. H. and W. T. from Mississauga, finished climbing the route “Jolly Rodger” around 1400 on August 23, and decided to rappel down the route. S. H. would go first, but declined a safety belay which W. T. offered him. A tree was slung with a piece of webbing, the doubled rope was secured to it with two non-locking carabiners, and then S. H. clipped his descender in to the rope. But as he leaned back to start the rappel, one side of the rope slid up through the anchor carabiners, and S. H. fell some 20 meters to the ground; he had clipped in only one side of the rappel rope. Nearby climbers assisted and ran to the lifeguard station for help, and rescue personnel reached the victim within minutes, but S. H. did not revive, and was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital at 1500.

Analysis

S. H.’s level of rappel experience is not known, so his error could have resulted from either unfamiliarity or haste. While there were easy ways down from the top, W. T. offered a safer approach to rappelling in the form of a top belay.

Every aspect of the rappel system is important and should be verified, including the harness, the clip-in, the threading of the descender, the rope, the anchor attachment, and the anchor itself, before a commitment is made. In this case, the tree may have been adequate as a single anchor, but use of two separate slings is recommended, as is the use of two locked safety carabiners or two standard carabiners with gates outward and opposite. Also, partners should thoroughly check each other’s setup. Finally, S. H. did not wear a helmet, which could have saved his life. (Source: Robert Stock, Ontario Climbing Instructor)

FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT—LEADER AND BELAYER, DEHYDRATION/FATIGUE

Ontario, Bon Echo Provincial Park, “Ottawa” Route

On September 4, J. N. (47) was leading the second pitch of “Ottawa” (5.7), belayed by M. C. (22), when he fell while attempting the crux of the route. J. N. sustained a contusion to his right thigh and abrasions to his right hand. He then set up an intermediate belay stance, using two rusted fixed pitons just below the crux, one of which had just held his fall, to bring up M. C. When M. C. arrived, J. N. told him they should descend about five meters to a good crack and set up a ‘state of the art’ belay, but M. C. had already led that section twice that summer and said there was no reason he should fall.

M. C. took the rack, and started up the crux moves. He clipped a runner over the neck of one of the belay pitons, as its eye was used for the belay setup, then continued climbing. He placed one more piece, and then about four meters above the belay, M. C. called out, “Falling.” His protection pulled out and he fell past J. N., causing a near-factor-two load on the belay. The belay anchor failed, and both climbers fell about 55