

## **FALL ON SNOW/ICE COVERED ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT**

### **New Hampshire, Cannon Cliff, Omega**

On March 13, Alan Cattabriga (35) started up Omega, an extremely difficult and dangerous mixed (ice, rock, verglas, and snow-covered rock) route on the east face of Cannon Cliff a few hundred feet south of the Whitney-Gilman Arête. Cattabriga placed protection near the ground and threaded a runner behind ice columns at 20 feet. Higher on the pitch he threaded another runner around a less solid ice column. His highest protection was a Spectre ice piton, a steel beak made for marginal conditions. He was above that and at a point about 40 to 45 feet above the ground, standing on his front points on a snow covered 80° rock slab, with no adequate holds for his hands, when his front points slipped. He fell and the top two protection points failed. He hit the ground before the better protection came into play.

Cattabriga suffered a broken tibia and fibula in his right leg and a broken scapula in his left shoulder. He also had extensive bruising to his left shoulder (with probable rotator cuff damage), left ribs, elbow, hip, and calf. The entire left side of his body turned black and blue a few days after the accident. He was wearing a helmet and received no head injuries.

Cattabriga's two climbing partners, Jim Shimberg and Ted Hammond, splinted Cattabriga's right leg and then tied his helmet over his right foot so that his foot would slide easily over the snow. Cattabriga then crawled feet first down the snow covered talus slope and then at times head first through the trees. The crawl to the road took four hours.

### **Analysis**

Omega is "an extreme route which epitomized the desperate nature of modern ice climbs with its thinly-verglassed start [and] mixed climbing... . [It] rarely comes into shape" (p. 72, *An Ice Climber's Guide to Northern New England*, second edition, by Rick Wilcox). The three experienced climbers understood the risks of difficult climbing and marginal protection. After the accident, Cattabriga wanted a self-rescue—with help from his partners—because he believes in climbers being self-reliant if at all possible. (Sources: George Hurley, Alan Cattabriga, and Jim Shimberg)

## **FALL ON ROCK, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES**

### **New Hampshire, Cathedral Ledge, Intimidation**

On May 21, Craig Johnson (26) was at the crux move on Intimidation (5.10) trying to place protection, but could not. So he "went for it." He made the crux and was about to put in protection when he slipped off "polished, moist rock." He fell 20 feet and hit a ledge just as the rope came tight. He broke both tibias and fibulas.

### **Analysis**

Johnson "definitely recommends slinging two nuts to protect the crux." He also commented, "Make sure you are *leading* solid 5.10." (Source: Craig Johnson)

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT**

### **New Hampshire, Rumney Cliff, Holderness School Crack**

On July 3, I was leading Holderness School Crack, which I have climbed at least 20 times and led (in fact I led it before the accident). I scrambled onto the ledge, started the climb and placed a directional nut near the bottom. I continued and placed a #1 Friend. I continued about ten feet past the Friend (a total of 25 to 30 feet above the