

Analysis

The descent route on Little Twin Owls is both ascended and descended by countless numbers of climbers every year and is as clean and solid as any route gets. This accident emphasizes the need to test holds as a matter of routine procedure before weighting them, even though it doesn't guarantee that you won't dislodge a loose rock. Mr. Pollack is to be commended for executing the evasive maneuver back to the ledge that probably saved his life, although it is unfortunate that he still sustained serious injuries.

Questions may be raised regarding the appropriateness of climbing unroped on this easy route. The answers are not so definitive. A rope may have allowed Mr. Pollack to jump safely away, but possibly it would also have kept him in the direct line of the falling rock, allowed for leader fall injuries, allowed for the rope to be struck and broken, and/or potentially have placed a belayer in grave danger. (Source: Jim Detterline, Longs Peak Ranger)

EXHAUSTION – UNABLE TO DESCEND, DEHYDRATION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak

On September 1, a Colorado Mountain School guide reported to park rangers that Tim Ashwood (40), a climber with cerebral palsy who had been on the Diamond of Longs Peak for eight days, was ill and would need assistance in descending on the following morning. Ashwood was assisted by partners Jim Thurman and Matt Bliss in jumarring up the Diamond. Park rangers responded on September 2 with a horse to evacuate Ashwood to Longs Peak Trailhead, where he was transported by ambulance to Estes Park Medical Center. Ashwood was suffering from low energy levels, nausea, and dehydration. He was treated with four liters of IV fluid.

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While Ashwood is to be commended for his perseverance in attempting the realization of his dream—a climb of the Diamond—the nature of his condition and the inability of Ashwood and his partners to manage his energy levels and hydration were the primary causes of this incident. Contributory causes discovered by investigating park rangers included an obsessive desire of Ashwood in wanting to complete this climb at any cost. He had already failed several times. Also, there was commercial interest on the part of Ashwood's partners, amateur guides intending to profit from the publicity they got for hosting the climb. (Source: Jim Detterline, Longs Peak Ranger)

FALL ON ICE, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, POOR TOOL PLACEMENT, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Hidden Falls

On December 20, Ben Johnson (21) was leading Hidden Falls Left (I, WI, 3+) belayed by Krys Obrzut. Johnson climbed the first steep step to the ledge and placed the only screw he used on the route. Johnson continued up the vertical face and was climbing confidently and aggressively. He was attempting to make