

lum swings away from sport climbing. These folks are finding out the hard way that protection is only as good as one's ability to place it! Of the six incidents enclosed, three were the result of protection failure. On all of the climbs involved, it is quite straightforward for an experienced climber to protect.

Two of the other incidents were the result of the climber falling low on the climb and hitting a bad landing zone without impacting the belay at all. One had not reached the first bolt on a sport climb, the other spaced his protection too far apart.

The last was a simple pick off of a soloist who at least had the sense to stay put after a sudden squall left the rock wet and slippery. (Source: Brad Shilling, Climbing Ranger)

ROCK BROKE OFF, FALL ON ROCK, CLIMBING UNROPED, FAILURE TO TEST HOLDS, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, INEXPERIENCE

Kentucky, Red River Gorge State Park

On October 2, a climber (22) was on top of Courthouse Rock looking for an anchor placement for rappelling. He had his harness on but was unroped. He went near the edge and the rock broke off underneath him, resulting in his fall off the cliff of about 75 feet, with an additional 25 feet of tumbling at the bottom. His partner went to get help, and three hours later, a search and rescue team arrived and brought the victim out on a rolling backboard. He suffered a pneumothorax and fractured arms.

Analysis

Rappelling is a very popular activity in this park. The victim reported that he had limited experience and was unfamiliar with the area. The sandstone in this area is unstable, but there are plenty of trees to anchor to while exploring around the top of the cliff. Many of the accidents here are the result of hikers, etc., getting drunk and falling off. (Source: Jason Maddux, M.D.)

FALLS ON ROCK AND ICE

Maine, Baxter State Park, Mount Katahdin

There were three incidents reported from Mount Katahdin, all of them happening in February. Scant details were provided. Two involved ice climbers injuring their knees, the third a fall from the Cilly Barber route.

There were a total of 41 search and rescue missions in the park for the year. (Source: Irvin Caverly, Jr., Director, Baxter State Park)

FALL OR SLIP ON ROCK, INADEQUATE EQUIPMENT, INADEQUATE PROTECTION, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE, NO HARD HAT

North Carolina, Looking Glass Rock, The Nose

On June 19, Keith Ballencourt (30) and two less experienced friends were climbing The Nose (5.8), one of the most popular routes on the mountain. PW, a local guide, spoke with Keith, who described himself as an experienced lead climber at Stone Mountain, NC, an area notorious for long run outs and steep friction. According to PW, Keith was carrying a "Yosemite style rack" (a ban-

dolier which was FULL of assorted gear). PW gave Keith route beta and even held in his hand the specific cams that Keith needed to protect the route. PW relates the rest of the incident: "I didn't really watch him climb, as I was instructing beginners at the base of Peregrine (a climb adjacent to the Nose). The time was about 3:00 p.m. I heard the unforgettable and unmistakable sound of someone falling—scraping and bouncing down the mountain! When I looked up, it seemed that he was falling from either Peregrine or the new rappel line or possibly the top of the mountain, as his speed was considerable. I noticed two people at the lower rappel anchor. I was afraid that he was going to hit, or come close to us at the base of Peregrine. When he was approximately 50 feet from the ground, he began being pulled towards The Nose and came to rest with his feet approximately four feet off the ground! He never lost consciousness but was stunned and disoriented. It seems a miracle that his injuries were not more severe, especially since he wasn't wearing a helmet (Keith suffered a fractured right leg and head injury). He was also very fortunate to have such a skilled group of people in the vicinity (a doctor and EMT were in the area, probably the climbers PW noted on the lower rappel anchor).

"I am afraid that (due to his position on the rock) he may have been climbing below and to the right of the ramp in an effort to reach the lower rappel anchor on Peregrine, as I'm sure that he could see the two climbers there. All of this in spite of the fact that I gave him clear directions to climb the white streak/ramp on the Nose."

The rescue squad was on the scene in just under an hour. He was carried out via litter and transported to the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education (fish hatchery) to a waiting helicopter. He was evacuated to Mission St. Joseph's Hospital in Asheville, NC.

Analysis

Looking Glass offers climbers steep terrain and limited fixed protection, thus requiring climbers to be familiar with placing gear. Stone Mountain (an area familiar to Keith) is not as steep and almost all protection is fixed. Keith may have benefited by having a better knowledge of the route and placing gear. Also consider placing more gear, especially in unfamiliar territory and when the opportunity presents itself. Wearing a helmet is also a good idea. (Source: Bryan Haslam, PW, and *The Asheville Citizen Times*, June 20 and 21)

FALL ON ROCK – RAPPELLED OFF END OF ROPES

North Carolina, Grandfather Mountain, Shiprock

Okie McCornis (28) and his partner spent July 17 climbing on Shiprock, a popular climbing area located on Grandfather Mountain's East Side. After ascending B.O.G. (5.11), both climbers began their descent by rappelling from Boardwalk (5.8), a common rappel point. Both climbers had done this rappel twice during the day. They used a single rope doubled for the descent, making use of the intermediate station approximately 70 feet up the Boardwalk face on its leftmost side.

Prior to descending they heard thunder in the distance and rain was imminent. While on rappel, Okie forgot about using the intermediate rappel point