

## Analysis

This was one example of a climber being caught unaware as a loose rock pulled free of the mountain. Testing holds when scrambling unroped is just as important as when on lead. (Source: Dan Burgette, SAR Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

## BELAY ANCHOR FAILURE—KNOT CAME UNDONE, FALL ON ROCK

### Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Mount Owen

On the evening of September 3, a cell phone call reported an Exum client with a sprained ankle on the West Ledges of Mount Owen. Tanya Bradby of Seattle, WA, was on a guided climb of the Grand Traverse. After spending the night of September 2 on the east ridge of Mount Owen, they went to the summit and started descending the West Ledges. About three hundred feet below the crest of the south ridge, they came to a steep step of ten or more feet. The guide decided to lower the client down this step. Earlier, the guide had threaded an anchor with a sling. After using the thread, she didn't retie the knot on the sling. For the lowering, she took the sling she had threaded before, tied a knot to join its ends, and slung a boulder. She clipped a locking carabiner into the sling and used a Munter hitch. As Bradby weighted the rope, the sling failed because the knot came undone. Bradby got her foot stuck in a crack during her fall, and her ankle was sprained as a result. Bradby hit a ledge below the step, and the guide was able to hang onto the 8-mm rope with her burned hands, which kept Bradby from tumbling down the seventy-degree face.

## Analysis

This is a sobering incident. An experienced guide tied a knot that failed when it was weighted. This reaffirms the basic rule that one has to check and recheck all knots and anchors before a life is trusted to them. This incident should get the attention of all, including experienced climbers. (Source: Dan Burgette, SAR Ranger, Grand Teton National Park)

*(Editor's Note: As Peter Lev, one of Exum Guides owners pointed out, "...these things have happened to just about every climber at one time or another, but what really matters is that the guide SAVED THE DAY by hand holding a small-diameter rope. No small feat. It is the 'save' that separates out the climbers/guides with 'the right stuff.'")*

## ROCK PULLED OFF—BROKE CLIMBING ROPE, FALL ON ROCK

### Wyoming, Wind River Range, Cirque of the Towers, Wolf's Head Peak

On September 22, Michael "Scott" Shaw (31) of Talkeetna, Alaska, died in a mountaineering accident while descending Wolf's Head Peak in the Cirque of the Towers.

Scott and Alex Everett (both National Outdoor Leadership School instructors) summited Wolf's Head Peak via the East Ridge around 4:10 p.m. They rappelled the west face by double rope rappel then climbed 4th class to the notch above a prominent east facing chimney/gully descending to Cirque Lake. They made four single rope rappels to the floor of the gully. On the fourth and last rappel, the rappel rope became stuck when they tried to retrieve it. They decided that Scott would climb back up to dislodge it. Scott climbed, belayed by