

way that if I sat up, it crammed down on my arm. So my partner had to come down using his Tibloc so I could right myself. I consider myself in excellent shape, at 5'8" and 155 pounds. I climb sport and trad at a high level. But I felt so helpless in this predicament, even though I was on a fairly low angle (maybe 45 degrees at this point) slope. I came out of it with no injuries, but my buddy was less fortunate. He had the puncture wound from the crampon in his thigh and had tweaked his knee, but was able to descend under his own power, albeit slowly, and he was in pain. The climber who hit him caught up to us and apologized emphatically.

Upon reaching 14,200 feet, we had Ranger John Evans assess my partner and determined that with deteriorating weather coming in, the helicopter would not be able to pull him off for a few days. He decided to make a go of it down, but knew that once he started he would not be able to stop due to swelling and pain. We unloaded all of his gear and divided it up between two roped teams. We used skis as our mode of transportation on the lower slopes, but my partner was not able to put skis on until the more mellow five-mile "traverse" from 7,900 feet to basecamp. We made it out in one push.

Analysis

Often teams want to get down the mountain in a hurry, to get back to the 14,200-foot camp and not wait until the team ahead of them is off the first fixed line. Coupled with no breaking devices on the fixed lines, just using an arm rap with two cordelettes with 'biners to act as runners on the fixed lines, it means that when one climber falls, he takes out the others below him. (Source: Ryland Moore)

KNEE INJURY, INEXPERIENCE

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On May 30, the two members of the Sled Dog expedition, Matt Sachs (34) and June Braugham (40) were evacuated from the 14,200-foot camp on Denali. On the 29th, Sachs sustained a knee injury while climbing to the fixed lines and requested ranger assistance to descend. Sachs was lowered approximately 1,200 feet by NPS personnel to the 14,200-foot Ranger Camp where he received medical assistance for the night. Sachs was flown to 7,000-foot camp the following morning by the Denali Lama helicopter. Due to her very limited mountain experience, Braugham accompanied Sachs to Denali basecamp after it was deemed unsafe for her to continue climbing on the mountain.

Analysis

It is likely Sachs' prior knee injury contributed to its final blow-out. By avoiding consecutive days of heavy use on a weakened knee, Sachs could have better monitored the extent of his previous injury. Once evaluated by a doctor, it was determined that Sachs damaged his lateral and medial collateral ligaments. With no additional damage to surrounding ligaments, injury may have resulted from the cumulative use of a sprained knee. Having a CB radio did prove beneficial in expediting a rescue. However, choosing

a climbing partner ill-suited for Denali created a compromising situation for the climbing rangers, the National Park Service, June Braugham, and Matt Sachs himself in deciding the safest means of descent for Braugham. (Source: Ranger Karen Hilton)

HAPE

Alaska, Mount McKinley, West Buttress

On June 1, Peter Staples (48) of the "OSAT,03" expedition, suffered from High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE) while camping at the 17,200-foot camp on Mt. McKinley's West Buttress route. Staples was assisted by his team and National Park Service (NPS) Ranger Gordy Kito and NPS Volunteer In Park (VIP) Ryan Davis from the 17,200-foot camp to the 14,200-foot Ranger camp, where he was monitored and released. Staples was able to continue with his team down to the 7,200-foot Kahiltna base camp under his own power and without further incident.

Analysis

The amount of time that the "OSAT,03" expedition took to get to high camp was within the timeframe recommended by the NPS. Mr. Staples may have been able to increase his chances of acclimatizing well by taking even more time getting to the 17,200-foot camp. However, this technique may or may not have reduced the likelihood of his being stricken with HAPE. Like most cases of HAPE, Mr. Staples presented with only very mild symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) the first night at the 17,200-foot camp. Only after spending two nights at 17,200 feet did Mr. Staples present with audible rales and a debilitating shortness of breath. The quick actions of Mr. Staples and his team members in recognizing his condition as life threatening and rapid notification of the NPS staff, as well as the fortuitous placement of the Rangers contributed to the positive outcome of this incident.

It is worth noting that Mr. Staples fellow team members contacted the NPS Rangers with the intention of locating oxygen and descending with their ill teammate without assistance from NPS personnel. This self sufficient and responsible behavior that some teams display on Mount McKinley may be the result of the information and education program initiated by the NPS some years ago. This program focuses on informing climbers about the risks associated with high altitude mountaineering and the things they can do to help reduce their exposure to some of those risks and the possible result of these inherent dangers, up to and including death. (Source: Ranger Gordy Kito)

DEHYDRATION-EXHAUSTION, MINOR FROSTBITE, CLIMBING TOO SLOWLY-FAILURE TO TURN BACK

Alaska, Mount McKinley, Messner Couloir

At 0500 on June 3, Jan Markup (27), Petr Hoffman (27) from the Czech Republic, and Camelo Lopez from a Colombian-American expedition, who