

## Analysis

Dave Secunda, who is a member of the Colorado Mountain Rescue Group, said Hankins was climbing using one of the most technically challenging methods—solo climbing—without the aid of ropes or harnesses. “Soloing is not the way that most people climb,” he said. “It is an elite, high-end part of the sport. He was at the absolute extreme of the spectrum of risk that climbers take. There is no backup system. Climbing [has some inherent risks], and I think we all, as climbers, embrace those potential risks when we go out there. I think the right response is to pause and extend our thoughts and prayers to the people involved. (Source: H. Urie, *The Daily Camera*—July 23, mountainproject.com, and Dave Secunda, Rocky Mountain Rescue Group)

## FALL ON ROCK, POOR PRACTICE – HOOKED FINGERS THROUGH BOLT RING

### Colorado, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Rethinking the Ethics

Rethinking the Ethics (5.10a) is a 45-foot, four-bolt sport climb located on the Ripple Wall. The climb culminates at a two-bolt anchor beneath the top of an arch. In late September, a male climber was leading this route and upon reaching the two-bolt anchor, hooked his fingers into the ring to pull up rope. In his attempt to pull up the rope, he lost his hold and fell with the rope behind his leg. This action caused him to flip upside down and strike the back of his head on the rock, causing a concussion requiring an evacuation.

## Analysis

Upon reaching the top of the route, climbers clip the rope into both of the top anchors then girth hitch two slings to the harness through the belay/rappel loop and attach a locking carabiner to the end of each sling. Each sling is then clipped to each bolt on the anchor, no longer relying on the belayer or the climbing rope. At this point a figure-8-on-a bight is tied and clipped into either a carabiner on the harness or into the anchor, which prevents losing the end of the rope when it's untied in the next step. Next, the original tie-in knot is untied from the harness and passed through the rap rings on the anchor. More rope is pulled up from the belayer in order to rappel using both sides of the rope making sure both ends of the rope reach the ground. This technique eliminates unnecessary wear on the fixed gear, which has been an acknowledged problem at Red Rock Canyon. (Source: from a posting on mountainproject.com)

## FALL ON ROCK, PLACED NO PROTECTION, EXCEEDING ABILITIES

### Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, Grandmother's Challenge

On October 8, Kevin (51), an experienced climber, and his wife started the first pitch of Grandmother's Challenge (5.10c), a two-pitch climb on

Redgarden Wall. The first pitch is rated 5.8. Kevin was approximately 30 feet above the ground with no protection in place and slipped, landing feet first on a large ledge then losing balance and falling feet first again onto the ground. At least one ankle was fractured and the other severely sprained if not also fractured. Kevin also complained of lower back pain when rescue arrived. (Source: From an accident report completed by Chris Darr.)

*(Editor's Note: According to statistics kept by the Rocky Mountain Rescue Group, there were 20 reports of injured rock climbers within the group's response area last year. From 2002 to 2006, the group averaged 27 calls a year for injured climbers, with an average of nine responses a year in Eldorado Canyon State Park.)*

## **FALL ON ROCK**

### **Colorado, Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park, Stoned Oven**

On Monday, October 20, Irishman Michael Walsh (30) and his two partners were attempting the Stoned Oven Route (5.11d), a 13 pitch, Grade V rock climb located on the North Chasm View Wall. Around 11:00 a.m., Walsh was approximately 600 feet above the ground when he fell 30 to 40 feet while leading the fourth pitch of the route. He fell hard enough to shatter his helmet. He was disoriented and appeared to be suffering from a life-threatening head injury.

Walsh's partners lowered him to the floor of the canyon, and one of them ascended the 1,700-foot Cruise Gully route by scrambling and using an ascender on fixed ropes. After seeking help from the others, he gathered equipment, including sleeping bags, warm clothing and head lamps, and returned down the Cruise Gully to assist Walsh and the other partner.

At 1:30 PM a park visitor came to the North Rim Ranger Station to report the accident. The individual reporting the accident was not a member of Walsh's party, but she had been at the North Rim Campground when a member from Walsh's party appeared seeking assistance.

A hasty team responded immediately, descending the technically demanding Cruise Gully. Although their response time was slowed slightly by rain, the team reached Walsh just after 5:00 p.m. Due to the nature of Walsh's injuries, the park SAR team, assisted by members of Western State SAR, began a rescue operation despite the approaching darkness. A park SAR team member was lowered from the rim to the canyon floor in the area of the Hallucinogen Wall route (5.10, A3+). A litter carry was made from the base of the Stoned Oven route to the haul lines, and Walsh and a rescuer were then hauled 1,500 vertical feet to the canyon rim, arriving there around 11:00 p.m. Walsh was then flown to a hospital via air ambulance. The entire rescue operation took less than nine hours from the time of first notification to its conclusion.