

occurred when a 57 year old just lifted his foot while climbing on a self-belay top-rope. It re-located, but he had to be transported to his vehicle.

Ten climbers were inexperienced, eight were experienced, and the others were unknown. (Source: From reports submitted by Mohonk Preserve)

FALL ON ROCK, PLACED INADEQUATE PROTECTION

North Carolina, Stone Mountain State Park

On February 27, my two partners and I were getting ready to climb Mercury's Lead off the tree ledge. Two young women (I'll call them Jane and Joan) came walking down from the far end of the tree ledge and said they planned to lead the Great Arch (5.5). We chatted for a little bit and while Joan was racking up for her lead, our leader started off on Mercury's with me belaying. He got to the first bolt and was scoping out the rock above. Since he was in a secure spot, I felt comfortable glancing over to see how things were going on the Arch.

Joan had placed a piece of pro (a medium cam) about ten feet up and was climbing above it into the section where the crack widens before turning the first corner, approximately 20 feet up on the route. She was making a series of layback moves and when she got up to the corner, her hands came off. At this point, she was far enough above her single placement that it never came into play stopping her fall. She skidded down the face for several feet when it appeared that one or both feet caught on something causing her to flip backwards. She free fell the remaining distance to the ground (8-10 feet) and landed flat on her back.

Because I had my partner on belay, I couldn't respond immediately, but the third person in our group and Jane (Joan's belayer) went to check her condition. She remained motionless on her back. I could tell from where I was standing that she was conscious and that her eyes were moving.

My partner replaced his draw with a "bail-out 'biner" on the first bolt and I lowered him so we could assist. By that time, Joan was sitting up and moving her arms around and talking. She reported pain in her arms, hands, and legs, but didn't show any signs of broken bones. She also said she'd hit her head (she was wearing a helmet) and that she had a mild headache. This immediately sent up red flags to me for head trauma, so I asked her if she was feeling dizzy or experiencing any visual distortion. She said she wasn't.

The landing zone was fortunately free of rocks, but there were numerous tree roots surrounding the area where Joan landed. When she came to rest after the fall, it looked like her head was resting on a root, so presumably this was the point of impact for the head-blow she reported. Her arms showed obvious bruises where she rolled up her sleeves and there was redness on her hands, probably from scraping on the rock. cursory examination of her scalp showed no broken skin or bleeding. Before long, she was up and

moving around, flexing her arms and legs and rotating her head from side to side to see what hurt and what didn't. She also expressed embarrassment about having taken a fall from what she saw as an easy climb.

Jane and Joan had come up to the tree ledge with just one rope; they told us their intention was to climb the Arch and then descend by the walk-off trail. With that no longer an option, they would need to rappel to get to the ground, which of course is a two-rope rappel. We decided to fix their rope from the U-Slot rap station so they could do a single-line rappel, then drop their rope to them. Jane went first with their gear so she'd be on hand for a fireman's belay if necessary, then Joan rigged her belay/rappel device and rappelled down. Before they left, we urged that Joan get medical attention as some head injuries that seem minor can turn out to be life-threatening. They assured us they would do that, and that was the last we saw of them.

Analysis

In terms of observations and analysis of this accident, I guess my two main points would be: One, know your limits; and two, place adequate protection. The Great Arch isn't a highly difficult route, but the start in my experience has the hardest moves on the whole climb. Getting up and around that first corner involves some lay-back moves that are fairly strenuous. The leader in question seemed to be struggling with the lay-back. Her feet didn't seem to be high enough when she was making the moves. She would benefit from working similar moves on a top-rope until she gets more strength, technique, and confidence. As to protection, the problem this leader had was that she was so far above the only piece she had placed that it couldn't protect her fall. Before making the hard lay-back moves, it would have been good to have placed another piece of pro. No one likes to carry a big rack at Stone Mountain, but if you're not strong enough to make the opening moves without protection, bring the gear you need. One positive comment is that the leader was wearing a helmet. If she hadn't been, the blow to her head when she hit the root could have been more serious. (Source: Edited from a report by John Liles, witness)

ICE COLLAPSED, FALL ON ICE, CLIMBING ALONE AND UNROPED

North Carolina, Blue Ridge Parkway, Doughton Park

The body of Ralph Fickle (59), an experienced climber and guide, was found on March 4 about 200 feet below the Blue Ridge Parkway, a half-mile south of the Bluffs Restaurant at Doughton Park. Apparently, Ralph was free-soloing Farmer's Daughter. It seems that about 90 feet up and 10 feet from where the climb backs off and the lower angle ice tops out, the free hanging curtain of ice he was on completely fractured. Ralph had rigged a top anchored bail out line in case he felt the need to retreat. His ATC was clipped to the belay loop of his harness. Due to the large section