

Because Wood was not able to see or clearly hear Powers as he was climbing, failure to discuss what Powers planned to do when he reached the anchors contributed to the confusion that caused this accident. Clearer communication and planning can prevent accidents like this from happening to climbers of all skill levels and experience. That said, taking a climber off belay is a serious decision that should only be made when there is complete clarity about the situation. (Source: Phil Powers)

## **FALL ON ROCK, ROCKFALL**

### **Colorado, Poudre Canyon**

Late in the day on May 23 a female climber (31) was injured when she was struck by a rock and fell about 20 feet in Poudre Canyon, which is northwest of Fort Collins. She suffered a broken ankle, a crushing injury to her hand, and head lacerations. She was wearing a helmet.

She was transported to Poudre Valley Hospital after an hours-long rescue hampered by rugged terrain and darkness. (Source: 9news.com)

### **Analysis**

Rockfall is a common objective hazard in many areas. Be prepared by becoming aware of those areas where it is common and develop the appropriate tactics to avoid being struck by rock fall. (Source: Aram Attarian)

## **FALL ON ROCK, PROTECTION PULLED OUT, NO HARD HAT**

### **Colorado, Boulder Canyon, Practice Rock**

Reid Pletcher (22), and I (Mali Noyes) were climbing together on May 26. This was going to be our last climb of the day. He was leading the climb, placing gear as he ascended. When he was about 20-30 feet up the wall, he unexpectedly fell. At this point, he had four trad pieces in, but the top two pulled out. He landed on the rock ledge next to me. Because the ledge is downward sloping, I had to keep Reid on belay to keep him from sliding off the ledge. So I called for help.

For the minute or two that I waited for help, I could see Reid spitting and slowly moving his arms and legs. The four other climbers that were nearby were very helpful. We tried to calm him down and stabilize his head. He had a laceration on the back of his head and was bleeding a lot from his left ear. He was very confused and uncooperative. He kept on trying to stand up. While it was not ideal, he was most comfortable in the fetal position with his head in my lap. I applied pressure to the laceration on the back of his head and treated him the best I could for shock. While I was not next to him for the first one to two minutes after the fall, he was conscious and knew his name and my name the entire time. The Nederland Fire Department, Pridemark Paramedics, and Rocky Mountain Rescue safely removed Pletcher from the rock ledge and he was taken by helicopter to St. Anthony's Hospital where he was diagnosed with two skull fractures, brain contusions with a subdural hemorrhage and a wrist contusion. He is expected to make a full recovery after rehabilitation.

## **Analysis**

Reid was not wearing a helmet. Wear a helmet! Helmets are designed to protect the climber's head by absorbing energy and protecting against penetration. The consequences of not wearing a climbing helmet and sustaining a head injury could lead to impaired motor skills and paralysis, memory loss, altered personality, speech difficulty, and other life - changing issues. (Source: Mali Noyes, mountainproject.com)

## **FALL ON ROCK – INCOMPLETE TIE-IN KNOT**

### **Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park**

On May 28, Colin Gregg (34) was top-roping the first pitch of C'est La Vie (5.9) on Redgarden Wall. He had difficulty at a crux about 30 feet off the starting belay ledge (which is about 25 feet above ground level) and partially hung on the rope. The belayer reported that a lot of slack suddenly came into the system. When he tried to take in the slack, he noticed that the rope had come untied from the climber's harness. Gregg could not clip into fixed gear in his vicinity and though he fought to stay on the rock, he fell. Somehow his fall stopped roughly at the level of the starting belay ledge, saving him from an additional 25-foot fall to ground level.

Greg was alert and oriented after the fall, but complained of lumbar back pain. He was evacuated and transported to a hospital by ambulance. It is unknown whether the victim's tie-in knot was too loose, unfinished, or tied incorrectly.

## **Analysis**

Climbers should double-check themselves and each other: harness double-backed and tied in properly, knot in the end of the rope, belay rigged properly, and carabiner locked, etc. (Source: Steve Muehlhauser – Park Ranger, Eldorado State Park)

## **FALL ON ROCK, FAILURE TO FOLLOW ROUTE**

### **Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon**

Andy (28) and his partner Tamie (28) were climbing at Canal Zone during the evening of June 21. Andy had clipped the last bolt on Holiday Road (5.8) and was climbing to anchors on a slabby headwall with minimal holds. He was to the left of the bolt line when he slipped then fell. He most likely took a pendulum fall to the right, hitting his left ankle on a ledge below the final headwall. The left ankle was broken laterally towards the outside, suggesting that Andy was moving to the right when he hit the ledge. The ledge slopes upwards towards climber's left so it might have been closer to him than if he was more in line with the bolts.

Credit goes to Tamie, a petite woman (less than 100 pounds) who was