



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock, Off-Route, Unable to Clip Protection

New Hampshire, Rumney, 5.8 Crag

On May 18 a Dartmouth Outing Club excursion to Rumney included nine climbers. When they arrived, they split into teams and went to their selected climbs, having agreed to meet back at the van in early evening. Lynn (20s) had been climbing with her partner at 5.8 Crag at the same time that Anna's beginner trip (a separate group) happened to be climbing there. Lynn was leading a sport route when she got a little off-route, failed to secure a clipping hold, and fell. She glanced off a small ledge, taking the impact mostly on her lower back. It was painful, and she lowered off the route. Anna, who was nearby, saw this happen and helped to make sure Lynn was OK. Anna's beginner trip was heading home anyway, so Lynn had plenty of company as she walked back to our parked van. Her walking was apparently slow and pained. Once I reached the van and learned what had happened from both Lynn and Anna, I asked Lynn if I could check her over again. I asked her about the pain, palpated her spine, etc. I thought it would be OK to drive her back to Hanover in the van as planned, but asked if she would rather take an ambulance, which she refused. We got her in the most comfortable position we could (lying on her back) and made our way back to Hanover, where I brought her and her climbing partner to the ER at Hitchcock upon her request. She was fully aware, laughing, etc., but I believe that she wanted to get some X-rays taken to make sure there was no serious damage. Eventually the doctors confirmed that there were no broken bones or other serious issues. They told Lynn to rest the area and take an anti-inflammatory. I brought Lynn and her partner back to campus, where Lynn said she felt fine to be on her own. I called her the next day to check in, and she seemed to be recovering fine.

Analysis

Lynn and her partner were both relatively new to sport leading. Both were wearing helmets. She and her partner had all the knowledge and resources they needed in order to deal with the situation on their own, but because Rumney is a busy place, there were plenty of people around to help, including multiple groups of DOC and other Dartmouth undergrads. Anna Morenz has a Wilderness EMT certification, I have a Wilderness First Responder certification, and multiple others on the Rumney van and in Anna's beginner trip had other medical certifications. Overall I would say this event was within the normal range of accidents to be expected while sport climbing, and that the response was appropriate. I think that Lynn and her partner were climbing responsibly, that Anna and I responded responsibly, that the DOC's policies were effective, and that the situation was resolved in the best possible way. (Source: John Thompson, DOC trip leader.) (Editor's note: First, this climbing area is very popular. Many more incidents occur here each year, but we don't hear about them—unless they are fatalities or injuries requiring outside assistance—because the climbers, as in this case, self-rescue. Second, I specifically asked the DOC for this report because it is an excellent example of selfreporting and competence on the part of the climbers and leaders.)

Images

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