



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock - Lost Balance, Protection Pulled Out

Crowders Mountain State Park, Two-Pitch Wall

I was guiding a group at Gumbies on April 14 when a woman came up from the gully that leads down to Two Pitch Wall to tell me that Chris Bernick (37) had taken a long fall on Secret Service (5.10+)/Double Naught Spy (5.9 R), rendering him unconscious. From the top of the gully we could see him unconscious on a ledge, extremely far below the piece that had caught him. Chris' buddy was coming up the gully, on his way to the top to try to rappel down to Chris. We followed the friend and assisted with anchoring a rope at the top of the climb, barely reaching Chris. At this point rescuers arrived, and Alberto Beani, a former Italian mountain rescue team member, was on his way up to Chris, who had fallen to a point approximately 10 feet above the ground. My co-instructor and I fixed the rope at the top so Alberto could clip into it and assess Chris. Alberto attached himself to the rope and then secured himself to Chris' harness. Chris' belayer, Leslie, and others who had been instructed to hold onto her harness to support her, then lowered the pair to the ground. According to other climbers at the scene, Chris had reached the crux almost at the top of the climb when he fell. A witness stated that Chris lost his balance while clipping into a cam he had just placed. The fall caused some of his gear below to pull. He fell backward approximately 40 feet and slammed into the rock face head-on, damaging his helmet. He bounced again and landed on the small ledge where he was found unconscious and bleeding profusely. His fall was arrested by a nut (size unknown). Leslie stated that she did not believe she could lower him to the ground by herself without causing further injury, so she chose to wait for help. Chris' fall had pulled her four feet off the ground. Chris sustained severe head trauma and an injury to the right shoulder. He was transported by helicopter to Charlotte Medical Center. (Source: Joe V. and Crowders Mountain State Park.)

Analysis

Great effort and support by climbers assisting climbers. Solid gear placements and an anchored belayer could have made the difference here. (Source: Aram Attarian.)

Images

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