



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock, Placed No or Inadequate Protection

North Carolina, Whiteside Mountain

On May 26, my partner Amanda (24) and I (Ryan, 20) started the day with the intent of climbing Catholic School Girls Direct (5.11), but after completing the first pitch we decided to switch to the Original Route (5.10d), which I'd done before. After I led the first and second pitch, my partner started up the third. Around 11 a.m., after completing a short traverse and starting to climb off a ledge using a flake that cuts up and left, Amanda's foot slipped. There wasn't any protection placed, so she fell eight feet and landed on a three- to four-foot-wide, down-sloping ledge. Upon impact with the ledge, she heard both her ankles "snap." At this point she was about 80 feet above me, out of sight, and roughly 300 feet off the ground. After realizing what had happened, I instructed her to pull herself to a position on the ledge where I could take her off belay. Once she did this, I soloed the pitch to get to her. I removed her pack and excess gear and placed it on the ledge. I found some sticks and tape and splinted both her ankles. I then managed to build an anchor to the right and rig our single rope for a rappel. I then clipped our belay loops together with a sling and had her hold onto my neck while I supported her feet with one hand and managed the rappel with the other. I held her across my chest while I rappelled, using a Reverso autoblock backup. Once reaching the tree ledge on top of the second pitch, I pulled the rope and carried her to the opposite side of the ledge. I located the rappel tree and knew that I would be able to reach the ground from this point. I tied our only rope to the tree with a figure-8 follow-through to make roughly a 200-foot single-rope rappel, and repeated the same rappel procedure as before. Once on the ground, I gave her ibuprofen and got her as comfortable as possible. I elevated her feet, positioned my pack under her head, and placed her in the shade. Since there was no cell phone reception and I couldn't hike her out on my own (it's about two miles of treacherous hiking and scrambling), I started running back to the trailhead for help around 12:30 p.m. I kept checking my phone for reception, and around 12:40 p.m. I was able to call 911 for a rescue team. I made it to the parking lot by 12:45 p.m. and waited a few more minutes for the paramedics to arrive. One of the paramedics and I hiked back in, reaching my partner around 1:30 p.m. A few minutes later, additional rescuers arrived with a

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was able to call 911 for a rescue team. I made it to the parking lot by 12:45 p.m. and waited a few more minutes for the paramedics to arrive. One of the paramedics and I hiked back in, reaching my partner around 1:30 p.m. A few minutes later, additional rescuers arrived with a Stokes litter. Once she was stabilized in the litter, we started the carry out. It took roughly 30 people four hours to complete the evacuation. She finally arrived at the hospital around 6:30 p.m. She underwent surgery for a tibia/fibula fracture (right leg) and a fibula fracture (left leg). She is expected to make a full recovery.

Analysis

Know the route, be aware of certain “no fall zones,” and be extra careful in those areas. Also take extra precautions when routes have X or R ratings, and have the skills to initiate a self-rescue. (Source: Ryan Little.)

Images

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