



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock, Protection Pulled Out

North Carolina, Hanging Rock State Park, Moores Wall

I witnessed an accident on June 8 that teaches a good lesson and luckily had an okay outcome. The climber was a strong and competent, but new to the area. I watched him easily climb Nuclear Crayon (5.10c R) and Quakerstate (5.10d/11a). After onsighting both he started Stab in the Dark (5.10d).

He pulled the boulder problem off the ground (placing one piece of gear along the way) and climbed up under the low roof about 15 to 20 feet off the ground. At this point there is a crack under the roof where gear can be placed prior to traversing left around the arête to gain the crux crack sequence. He placed a nut and a yellow Alien under the roof, both clipped to the same sling.

After attempting to get established around the arête and place some gear, he decided to retreat to the nut/cam placement and asked his belayer to "take." As soon as he weighted the gear, both pieces pulled and he fell to the ground, landing flat on his back. It looked like a very hard fall. The three of us in the Amphitheater ran to help. Long story short, he had a small cut on his back, got the wind knocked out of him, maybe a sprained ankle, and an injured tailbone. He decided he was okay and was able to walk out on his own.

Analysis

The horizontal crack under the roof starts out very uniform on the right. Near the left side, where one pulls around the arête, the crack has a narrow opening and slightly widens deeper inside the crack. I believe this is where he had the gear, and had placed a cam that was too small for the crack. It was likely the right size for the opening, but too small once beyond the constriction. The cam inverted (breaking the trigger wires), and the second piece (the nut) was not sufficient to take the weight. The last piece was too low to do anything.

This is a good lesson to make sure there are two solid pieces between you and the ground or a ledge. Climbing with new people, new gear (the gear was not his), and in a new location might have contributed to this incident. (Source: C. Sproul, from a post on Mountainproject.com.)

Images

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