



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock - Inadequate Protection, Cam Pulled Out

New York, Shawangunks, The Trapps, Cascading Crystal Kaleidoscope

On August 9 a climber was starting either the second pitch of Cascading Crystal Kaleidoscope (CCK) or CCK Direct—the pitches start in the same area of Grand Traverse Ledge. He reportedly placed one cam in a horizontal crack, continued climbing, decided to retreat, and then fell or “took” on the cam. The piece popped and he fell 15 to 20 feet onto Grand Traverse Ledge, suffering a broken back and incomplete spinal cord injury. Rescuers lowered him and carried him to the Carriage Road, and he was airlifted to a hospital. Initially the climber was paralyzed from the waist down, but after surgery and rehab he has recovered significantly and is able to walk.

ANALYSIS

Many routes at the Gunks require calculated risks and run-outs, and CCK is a good example. The two main options for leaving Grand Traverse Ledge (5.7+ and 5.8+) both are considered PG/R for seriousness. If a climber is in doubt about this pitch, an easier and well-protected alternative (Updraft, 5.5) leads to a belay stance from which the final pitch of CCK or CCK Direct is easily accessed. Cam placements are prone to walking in horizontal cracks, and extending the piece with a long sling may prevent this. When making crucial protection placements (a single piece protecting against a long fall), backing up the piece is always recommended. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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