



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock - Failure to Test Hold

North Carolina, Pisgah National Forest, Victory Wall

On March 21, MT (30) and her partner (age 35) started an unnamed 5.7/5.8 climb on the Victory Wall. MT began the second pitch by moving right approximately 15 feet. After placing a blue Metolius TCU, she continued up, slotted a nut between a block and the wall, pulled up, and in the process dislodged the entire block, causing her to fall approximately 25 feet. The sharp, heavy block (100 pounds or more) struck her lower left leg. Luckily, her attentive belayer was able to arrest the fall.

T's shin was bleeding heavily and one of the ropes was cut to the core. She was lowered to the ground and was able to walk unaided the first 2/3 mile to the car. Her partner supported her the last 1/3 mile.

ANALYSIS

According to MT: "We were climbing on half ropes, and four out of the seven core strands and the entire sheath of one rope was cut. The other rope was fine and arrested my fall. As far as I can remember, I was falling at the same speed as the dislodged rock. When the rope finally arrested my fall, I was pulled up into the rock (which is how I got numerous, deep lacerations on my lower left leg and ankle). After the rock crashed past me, I smashed into the rock facing outward, with my butt and upper thigh area sustaining huge bruises and small cuts. My left calf was cut open and ended up swelling twice the size of my right calf.

My advice to other climbers: Learn how to place solid gear and always inspect the quality of the rock. Testing this placement could have prevented my accident. I didn't expect a rock the size of a 1980s microwave to move! (Source: MT.)

[Editor's note: This incident highlights an important benefit of using half (double) ropes, particularly in alpine terrain or crags where loose rock is suspected.]

Images

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