



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock

Arizona, Flagstaff, The Overlook

On October 25 a climber (female, 28) took a short leader fall near the top of Mint Jam (5.8) at the Overlook. All the gear held, and the belayer acted correctly. As is the case for many climbs at the Overlook, the leader was in a dangerous place to fall due to ledges below her. The climber began the awkward roof exit of the pitch, but she was dealing with a prior shoulder injury and decided it wasn't worth the risk of exacerbating the injury or falling off the roof move, so she backed off. She had barely started downclimbing when a foot unexpectedly cut. She clipped the back of a calf on a small ledge immediately below, flipped upside-down, and landed on her back on the low-angle slab below. The climber lowered off two cams and self-evacuated to the hospital. She was diagnosed with a spinal fracture and severe soft-tissue damage in the pelvic area.

ANALYSIS

The climber was about three feet out from the last pieces of gear she had placed and fell about 20 feet before impacting the slab. This length of fall was not unexpected, because the climber was about 80 feet away from her belayer and the rope would be expected to stretch significantly. She believes she would have impacted the slab even if her total fall distance had been a foot or two shorter. The rock was very dirty from earlier rains, and this probably contributed to her foot slipping.

The climber chose to lead in terrain that had unavoidable and dangerous fall zones, and she fell. She explained that although she recognized the climb's hazards and ultimately decided to back off the roof exit, her only real error was making the decision to get on the climb in the first place or else falling where she shouldn't have. (Source: The Editors, with information from the climber.)

Images

Article Details

Author	The Editors
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	0
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports