



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Fatigue, Inadequate Protection

Wyoming, Wind River Range, Warbonnet Peak

I met Birch Malotky in Colorado and we unexpectedly made plans to travel the next day to the Wind River Range to climb at the Cirque of the Towers. We arrived at Big Sandy Trailhead around 3 p.m. on August 23 and did the hike in that afternoon, but only made it as far as Warbonnet Peak, where we camped and decided to climb the peak the next day. Our route was the popular Black Elk, having an offwidth crux of 5.11 on pitch four.

We began the climb late on the morning of August 24 and moved somewhat slowly. After switching leads, I took the crux pitch. In the offwidth crack I felt very tired. After bumping my two number four Camalots up the crack, I decided to run it out to the anchor. My left foot slipped and the resulting fall was quite big because I had told Birch to give me a lot of slack, so a fall wouldn't slam me over the prominent roof on the pitch. During the fall the pinkie finger of my right hand got stuck between a number four cam and the rock, and my finger was lacerated severely.

I was lowered to the anchor and we then made four rappels, returned to base camp, packed up camp, and did the hike out. We drove to the hospital in Lander, Wyoming, to get the finger cleaned, X-rayed, and stitched. Some tendons were damaged but not cut, and the X-ray exam found some metal fragments inside the finger, probably from the anodized finish of a brand-new Camalot. The finger would recover, but it was expected to take three months before I could fully climb again.

Analysis

We started the wall too late, tired from the long drive and hike in the day before, and it was the first time we had done a multi-pitch or trad climb as a team. I had the opportunity to borrow a third big cam from friends below the route, but I declined. I'd been climbing for 16 years and am a professional climber in my native Ecuador, and I didn't think the route would be a big problem. Some of my learnings from this incident are to climb for yourself and don't try to show off. On any big climb it's important to be rested, hydrate well, and communicate as a team about your energy levels, timing, and objectives. (Source: Felipe Proaño.)

Felipe's story is featured in Episode 9 of the Sharp End podcast, available at [Soundcloud](#), [iTunes](#), [Google Play](#), and other outlets.

Images



Felipe Proaño on Black Elk.





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