



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection

Idaho, Sawtooth Mountains, Elephants Perch

On July 7, Anna Dvorak, 28, died as a result of injuries from a long leader fall on the third pitch of the Mountaineers Route (III 5.9). Dvorak's climbing partner had led the first pitch, linking the usual pitch one and most of pitch two into a long lead. She took the lead for the next pitch, passing the normal anchor for pitch two and continuing up the 5.8 third pitch. Somewhere above the mid-pitch traverse to the left, out of sight from her belayer, Dvorak took a long, swinging, inverted fall. She was wearing a helmet but nonetheless suffered a serious head injury.

Two other people heard calls for help and climbed to the second-pitch belay ledge on the route, where they gave first aid to the patient. However, she soon lost vital signs, and after 45 minutes of CPR the climbers gave up trying to resuscitate her. A large, multi-unit rescue team that had already responded to the scene assisted the climbers, then bivouacked near the base of the route and recovered the body the next day. (Sources: Published eyewitness and SAR reports.)

ANALYSIS

According to her climbing partner, none of Dvorak's protection pulled out during her fall, which suggests she had not placed enough pro to adequately safeguard the pitch. It's often tempting, especially on longer routes where speed is important, to run it out on terrain that feels easy for you. But placing a few "just in case" pieces can dramatically reduce the consequences of a sudden slip.

Many climbers mistakenly believe that a swinging fall will be slower or have less impact than a straight-down fall; in fact, a pendulum generates just as much speed and impact, and it often increases the chances of hitting an obstacle. Protecting soon after a traverse can mitigate this possibility. In this case, a swing may have contributed to inverting the climber into a headfirst plunge, with disastrous results. (Source: The Editors.)

Images



Elephants Perch. Red dot marks the approximate location of the fall on Mountaineers Route. Steph Abegg

Article Details

Author	The Editors
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	69
Page	73
Copyright Date	2016
Article Type	Accident reports