



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection

Oregon, Smith Rock State Park, Christian Brothers

Keith Kowalczykowski, 30, was leading Hesitation Blues, a 5.10b face and finger crack, on April 18. He clipped the route's two bolts, at approximately 15 and 25 feet, then placed a small cam at 30 to 35 feet. He placed a fourth piece (type unknown) and then fell, pulling the fourth piece from the wall. The rope either was not clipped to the cam below or became detached, and the top bolt was too low on the route to keep Kowalczykowski from hitting the ground, after falling at least 40 feet. He suffered a skull fracture and concussion.

ANALYSIS

Kowalczykowski was unable to describe the placement of the third piece after the incident, but it remained on the route and was examined afterward. The piece had been extended with a shoulder-length sling attached to the cam with a carabiner. A second carabiner, intended to clip the rope, was attached to the cam's sling adjacent to the first biner, suggesting the climber accidentally clipped the sling of the cam instead of the rope. Whether this mistake was made in haste or because the climber was pumped, he might have caught the error if he had glanced at the placement before continuing up the route. Placing additional pro, at shorter intervals, could have prevented a long fall when the top piece failed. (Source: Matt Crawford, Deschutes County Sheriff's Office Search and Rescue.)

Images



A climber appears to have accidentally clipped his extension sling back into the small cam he placed to protect a 5.10 climb at Smith Rock, instead of clipping the sling to the lead rope.



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