



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection, No Helmet

West Virginia, Summersville Lake, Coliseum

During the afternoon of July 31, a climber from Canada (name unknown) fell while leading Apollo Reed (5.13a) at Summersville Lake, a popular summer climbing area 30 minutes north of the New River Gorge National River. According to others present, the climber skipped the seventh bolt and was attempting to clip the eighth bolt when he fell. Due to the cumulative slack in the rope and at the belay, the climber struck the wall when he fell and then swung into a large boulder.

The climber landed headfirst on the boulder, striking just above his left eye. Witnesses called 911 and administered basic first aid. The climber remained conscious throughout the incident and was evacuated within 30 minutes by boat and then by helicopter to Charleston. Eyewitnesses reported the climber suffered multiple broken bones as well as unspecified head injuries. (Source: Climbers at the scene.)

ANALYSIS

This fall became serious primarily because of skipping available protection prior to reaching the crux of the route. Additionally, the climber was not wearing a helmet that could have prevented or reduced the head injuries sustained from the fall. For information on how to identify and assess head injuries, see “Essentials: Head Injuries” in *Accidents 2015*. (Source: R. Bryan Simon.)

Editor’s note: At least two other accidents that required medical attention occurred at Summersville Lake in 2015. Both were the result of leader falls on 5.8 climbs between Narcissus Wall and Orange Oswald Wall and resulted in ankle/lower leg injuries.

Images



A climber on Apollo Reed at Summersville Lake, high above the large boulders involved in an accident in 2015.

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