



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection**

Wisconsin, Devil's Lake State Park, West Bluff

**On November 8, a 23-year-old male climber was leading a pitch on the West Bluff, belayed from the ground by a friend. He had just set his second piece of protection, at approximately 25 to 30 feet, when he fell. The top piece pulled out, and the lower one failed as well. The lower piece was still placed in the rock, with a sling attached but no carabiner connecting it to the rope; the carabiner remained attached to the rope and fell to the ground with the climber. The victim fell approximately 25 feet and was unconscious for about 25 seconds. He indicated he had injuries to his right wrist and right hip and was concerned about a back injury. His helmet was scuffed and cracked. (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Visitor Accident Report.)**

#### **ANALYSIS**

Inadequate protection was placed. The rock at Devil's Lake can be slippery and challenging to protect, and gear must be placed with extra care in the jagged rock, using slings and quickdraws for extension to keep protection from rotating out of place. It's unclear if the lower piece was never clipped properly to the rope or if it became detached as the climber moved above it. Using a locking carabiner to clip a route's first piece of pro to the rope can provide some additional security.

This climber's helmet may prevented a much more significant injury. (Source: The Editors.)

Editor's note: Other climbing accidents at Devil's Lake in 2015 included a bouldering fall in which a 35-year-old woman broke her lower leg when her foot hit a rock before landing on the pads below the problem. There were several incidents of people falling while soloing or scrambling, but it's unclear if they were climbers or hikers.

**Images**

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