



## AAC Publications

---

### Leader Fall Onto Ledge

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, West Ridge

A climber on Foxtrot in Eldorado Canyon. Photo by Adam Brink

**March 5 was a beautiful, sunny day in Eldo and I decided that after a good warmup I would put in a few burns on my project: Foxtrot (5.11d PG-13). I had top-roped this climb several times, doing it clean once.**

I got up to the rest section just below a small roof and placed a yellow Metolius TCU (approximately 3/4-inch piece) in a seam. Above that piece is the crux of the route, and the next opportunity for gear is a tricky placement with a green Alien, followed by a seam higher up that takes small nuts. After a rest, I climbed up to the last move of the crux, a tricky layback or a long deadpoint to a positive flat edge. I didn't have a green Alien (and I didn't know about that placement yet anyway), so I tried to deadpoint for the big edge but came up an inch short. The yellow TCU that I'd placed at the roof held my fall, which was clean and not too jarring.

I pulled up for another attempt and tried the same move with a little more umph but fell a second time. The piece held again. I looked over the placement and it seemed fine, so I decided to try again. I threw to the final hold and latched for a split second, cutting feet and swinging out from the wall Air Jordan-style. But then I slipped again and sailed through the air. This time the yellow TCU pulled out of the crack and I kept falling. My next piece was four to five feet below: an orange Metolius Master Cam placed in a good constriction. My fall extended another 10 feet or so. The rope began coming tight just as I got to the ledge that marks the start of the hard climbing, and I clipped the outside corner with my left foot before the rope stopped me a few feet later. I suffered an avulsion fracture on the medial malleolus and a fully torn superior peroneal retinaculum that required surgery to repair.

### ANALYSIS

The biggest mistake I made was not readjusting the cam into its ideal spot after taking the first fall. I just assumed that because the piece held a fall it must be solid. The crack is a bit shallow and downward-facing, since it is in a small roof, and the cam may have been sliding a small amount out of its ideal position in each fall, until it was close enough to the outside that it popped out.

The second big mistake I made was that I trusted just one piece of gear to catch my fall, and I didn't consider the consequences of the piece pulling out. Had I placed another piece adjacent to the one that pulled, or at least closer to my second-highest piece of pro, the ledge fall could have been prevented.

Finally, my familiarity with the route had led me to believe it was safe enough for me to project the climb on lead before I had every move and placement dialed. I obviously was not solid on the crux, and had I not fallen at all I would have been completely safe. My hard-man attitude about leading and taking falls got in the way of good risk assessment. (Source: Mike Minson.)

## Images



A climber on the route Foxtrot (5.11d) in Eldorado Canyon.

## Article Details

Author	Mike Minson
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	70
Page	56
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Accident reports