



AAC Publications

Leader Fall – Clipped Wrong Rope to Protection

Canada, Ontario, Metcalfe North

An experienced local climber, age 68, was leading Peak Season in Harlem (5.8/5.9), a nine-bolt sport route, in June. He attempted to take a rest by hanging at the ninth bolt, but when he sat back on the rope, he fell to about the height of the fourth bolt, impacting a ledge during his fall. The accident occurred around 11 a.m. His final orientation in the fall was head down. Fortunately, he was wearing a helmet.

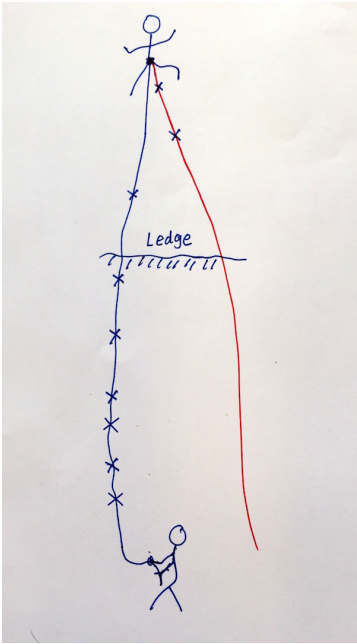
The leader was initially unresponsive for about one minute, and he experienced a temporary loss of vision. His sight then returned and he complained about back pain. One of the climbers present called 911. Paramedics arrived at 11:33 a.m., and after an assessment and initial treatment, he was secured to a stretcher and evacuated over rugged terrain. At the hospital, it was determined that he had seven broken ribs, internal bleeding in the lower back, pulmonary edema, lacerations on his nose and arm, and low blood pressure and heart rate, which may have been related to blood-thinner medication he was taking. A lengthy but full recovery was expected.

ANALYSIS

The leader had tied into two nearly identical ropes at the front of his harness. (His intention was to trail the second rope in order to set up a top-rope on an adjacent climb, once he reached the top.) He was utilizing the newer of the two ropes as a lead rope. He correctly clipped the lead rope to the first seven bolts. However, the leader mistakenly clipped the trailing rope to the top two bolts. The belayer was unable to see the error and warn the climber. When the leader attempted to rest at the ninth bolt, he fell until the rope clipped at the seventh bolt caught his fall.

The correct method of trailing a rope is to attach it to the rear clip-in point on the harness, keeping it away from the lead rope. (Source: Jane Howe.)

Images



The leader in this incident accidentally clipped his trail rope into the top two bolts of a sport climb.

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