



AAC Publications

Long Fall on Carlsberg Column – Inadequate Protection

Canada, British Columbia, Yoho National Park, Carlsberg Column

On December 28, two experienced climbers started up the classic Field ice climb known as Carlsberg Column. Carlsberg has an “approach pitch” that starts out with a steep little pillar (WI3) and then continues for another 30 meters of low-angled ice to reach a large ledge below the main route. After climbing the steep part of the approach pitch with no protection, the leader placed an ice screw and continued up the easier terrain, placing one more screw in good ice. Somewhere near the end of the pitch, he was preparing to place another screw when he fell, sliding down the low-angled ice and then flying over the steep section before his partner caught the fall, stopping him 10 meters above the ground. The total fall distance was estimated at 25 meters.

During the long fall, the leader slammed his feet into the ice and broke both of his ankles. When he came to a stop, he was conscious and a quick inventory revealed no other injuries except for the ankles. His partner lowered him to the ground and proceeded to make him comfortable before calling 911 for a rescue. Ultimately, the climber was evacuated to a waiting ambulance using a helicopter sling-rescue system.

ANALYSIS

While it is tempting to climb long distances between protection pieces when the climbing is not difficult, this tactic significantly increases the risk of an injurious leader fall. Anyone can fall while ice climbing—it doesn’t matter how good you are or how long you have been climbing. In this case, the climber had done the climb repeatedly and at times had soloed the approach pitch. The climber believes a tool placement that had appeared solid actually had fractured the ice significantly, and when he went to place his other tool the first tool popped out. When placing protection requires little effort, take the extra moment to place a few more ice screws, even when you don’t think you will fall.

Editor’s note: An interview with this climber was featured in Episode 13 (“Two Screws, Two Ankles”) of the Sharp End podcast. Listen below.

Images



Diamgram of the Carlsberg Column fall.

Article Details

Author	
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	60
Page	114
Copyright Date	2017
Article Type	Accident reports