



AAC Publications

Long Leader Fall – Loose Hold, Inadequate Protection

California, Sierra Nevada, Palisades, Temple Crag

At approximately 6:30 p.m. on July 3, a two-person team began climbing the 15th pitch (5.4) of the 18- to 22-pitch route Sun Ribbon Are te (5.10a) on Temple Crag (12,999 feet). Just prior to arriving at the notch belay at the top of the pitch, the leader (female, 28) pulled on a loose rock and dislodged it. The leader fell approximately 60 feet and was held by a 0.75 Black Diamond Camalot once the belayer (male, 29) arrested the fall. The leader sustained a broken toe and sprained left ankle and broke the fifth digit (pinkie) of her left hand, in addition to multiple lacerations to the ankle, left leg, and left shoulder. The belayer suffered no injuries. Both climbers were wearing helmets.

None of the wounds was critical, and the injured climber was able to complete the pitch. The second climber then led the few remaining pitches to the top. They self-evacuated down to Contact Pass with the assistance of two other climbers, and eventually made it back to Second Lake and the trailhead.

(Source: Anonymous report from the belayer.)

ANALYSIS

This is our second report in two years of a loose hold leading to injury on Temple Crag. The loose rock on this route and others on Temple Crag is frequently mentioned in trip reports and route descriptions. The leader did not test the quality of rock before placing full weight upon it, thus resulting in the fall and injury. Knocking on suspicious rock with the knuckles or palm can often reveal loose holds, which may be avoided. Additionally, the leader should have placed more protection to prevent such a long fall. Even though the climbing was easy for her (both climbers lead 5.10), it's important to place protection regularly on moderate terrain, especially when the rock quality is poor.

(Source: The Editors.)

Images

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