



## AAC Publications

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### **Leader Fall – Lost Tooth**

West Virginia, Summersville Lake, Long Wall

**At 4 p.m. on April 8, Connor Damato (age 21) was attempting to lead Jesus Is My License Plate (5.10d), a sport route on Long Wall. This was Damato's first outdoor roped climbing experience and his first day of lead climbing. He and his partner had been climbing all day.**

Damato's partner attempted to lead the pitch but stopped at the second bolt and was lowered. Damato then began the route, moving through the lower sections of the climb without difficulty. He was above the fifth bolt, attempting to clip the anchors, when he fell.

Damato was positioned an arm's length below and to the left of the anchor and had just placed a quickdraw through the leftmost anchor bolt. He had pulled up slack in the rope and held it with his teeth before clipping the rope in the draw. At this point he fell. Due to the slack in the system and his belayer standing away from the base of the wall, he fell approximately 35 feet. His fall was arrested approximately four feet from the ground. During the fall, Damato instinctively bit down on the rope, and as the rope jerked free it pulled one tooth completely from his mouth and fractured and impacted another tooth into his gum line. The climbers were unable to locate the missing tooth.

### **ANALYSIS**

This was the first outdoor climbing trip for Connor, who said he mainly bouldered in the gym. He and his partner should have scaled back their expectations rather than attempt a climb that was beyond their abilities. Though Damato suffered no other injuries, the fall distance could have been lowered by the belayer standing closer to the wall during the lead belay. It's important to have a solid clipping stance when holding slack with your teeth, or else try to move to a stance that avoids this method altogether.

Editor's note: A similar incident occurred at Indian Creek, Utah, in 2016. The climber, a dental hygienist, had two teeth dislodged and one knocked out but saved all three teeth with quick action.

### **WHAT TO DO ABOUT KNOCKED-OUT TEETH**

- Do not scrub, disinfect, or allow the root of a dislodged tooth to dry out.
- Rinse the tooth with saline or water to remove debris; do not touch the root.
- Re-implant the tooth right away, if possible. Push the tooth into the socket; hold it in place with your fingers or by gently biting down.
- If unable to reposition the tooth, store it in milk or your saliva (possibly in cheek). See a dentist as soon as possible (ideally within 30 minutes). The longer the tooth is out, the less chance for successful re-implantation. Source: Auerbach's Wilderness Medicine, 7th Edition

## Images

## Article Details

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