



AAC Publications

Leader Fall – Inadequate Protection for Wide Crack

Wyoming, Vedauwoo, Nautilus

A climber with less than three years of experience attempted Mother I (5.7+ wide crack) with limited appropriately sized protection, which required bumping pieces up the crack as he ascended. The climber placed cams at 10 feet, 45 feet, and 60 feet, and he was in the process of moving up the highest cam (above him at the time) when his feet slipped out of the offwidth crack. As the leader was falling, the belayer was able to take in a bit of slack. The climber's fall was arrested when he was about five feet from the ground. He had minor lacerations and extensive abrasions from Vedauwoo's rough granite, but, amazingly, no worse injuries.

ANALYSIS

Climbs of this style often feel very difficult for their grade, especially to climbers still mastering wide crack techniques. During one's apprenticeship, it's important to carry plenty of protection. Making use of a limited rack by bumping pieces up the crack (moving them with you as you climb) is an effective tactic, but it leaves the climber vulnerable to a very long fall in case of a mistake. One technique is to clip the piece you're bumping to the rope with a long runner—you won't have to pull up as much heavy rope and/or reclip the piece each time you move it up the crack.

Although this climber did not hit his head in his long fall, he noted that he should have worn a helmet.
(Sources: Anonymous report and the Editors.)

Images

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