



AAC Publications

Lowering Error – Rope Too Short, Inattention

Canada, Alberta, Banff National Park, Lake Louise

June 18 was a busy day at the Back of the Lake. We were a group of seven; everyone knew each other, but not everyone had climbed together. Everyone was a physically strong climber, which may have led to a sense of complacency.

Several of the climbers decided to link Public Enemy into Bloodsport (5.11-) after seeing another party do the same. The other party said the combined pitches totaled 43 meters, but their 80-meter rope “did the trick” for lowering, with stretch. Person 1, one of our group members, said his rope was 80 meters. Person 1 linked the two pitches and attempted to lower to the ground. Person 2, lowering Person 1 with his Grigri, was looking up at Person 1 when the rope pulled through the belay device. There was no knot, and the rope was not 80 meters. It was 70 meters.

Person 1 fell about five meters to a ledge, bounced off his butt with his back to the cliff, and then ricocheted between a tree trunk and the cliff. When he hit the ground he had fallen 12 meters. Person 1 was evacuated with the help of many climbers and Banff Visitor Safety. He had a concussion and minor scrapes to his head where he had collided with the tree. He had not been wearing a helmet.

ANALYSIS

There were a lot of assumptions made that day, including the obvious one that the rope was long enough for this route. Then came the negligence of not tying a stopper knot on a long route and not wearing a helmet. Contributing factors included the busyness at the crag and rotating partners who had not climbed together before. Assumptions of experience were made based on physical abilities. It was a casual day of climbing, and the casual attitude led to a grave error. (Source: Anonymous member of the group.)

Images

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