



AAC Publications

Off Route Rappel on the Nose

California, Yosemite Valley, El Capitan

On the night of May 15, around midnight, two climbers (male and female, both in their 30s) reported they were stranded on a ledge below Dolt Tower on El Capitan. The climbers had attempted an alpine-style ascent of the Nose, bivying once at El Cap Tower. Moving more slowly than expected, and with a storm forecasted, they decided to retreat just short of the Great Roof at 5:30 p.m. on their second day of climbing.

After a number of successful rappels, the team had rappelled from El Cap Tower and arrived at an anchor 50 feet right of Dolt Tower. From here, they rappelled to the next visible anchor, the top of pitch seven of the Central Scrutinizer, a hard aid climb adjacent to the Nose. Their last rappel of the day took them to a large ledge system, where they built a gear anchor and pulled their ropes with the hope that they would find rappel stations below. However, they were not successful, nor could they climb back up the line they had rappelled. Luckily, they were well prepared for an emergency bivy, with food, jackets, and water.

Next morning, using a spotting scope in El Cap Meadow, YOSAR determined the climbers would be able to reach a large corner system midway up pitch five on the Real Nose route, and from there a rappel route existed to the ground. By cell phone, they advised the team to rappel to this corner, build another gear anchor, and continue their descent from there.

ANALYSIS

There is a tremendous amount of information available for the Nose climb and a well-established rappel line. Haste may have contributed to the climbers' decision to commit to their gear anchor on what should have been a bolted rappel route. (Source: Yosemite National Park Climbing Rangers.)

Images



Diagram of off-route rappel during a retreat from the Nose on El Capitan.

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