



AAC Publications

Lowering Error – Belayer Pulled Into Rock, No Helmet

Colorado, Boulder Canyon, Cascade Crag

On September 13 a belayer began lowering a climber from a sport route with an ATC Guide device. The climber outweighed the belayer by roughly 50 percent. The belayer, standing on unstable rocky ground about six to eight feet away from the wall, was pulled off balance during the lower. She spun to the left and fell toward the rock face, hitting her head and left side. However, the belayer was able to hold onto the brake strand, keeping the climber from falling very far. Another climber quickly came to assist and finished lowering the climber, using the belayer's device. The belayer, whose injuries included a head laceration and cracked ribs, was evacuated to the nearby road.

ANALYSIS

The belayer was located too far from the wall on unstable terrain and wasn't anchored (to a tree, a ground anchor, or other solid anchor), a useful practice when the climber significantly outweighs the belayer. This incident is also a good reminder of the importance of wearing a helmet (and good shoes) while belaying single-pitch climbs from the ground. To the belayer's credit, she managed to maintain her grip on the brake strand despite the impact and her injuries. (Source: Anonymous report from the climber.)

Images

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