



## AAC Publications

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### **Ground Fall – Quickdraw Unclipped From Bolt**

Oregon, Smith Rock, The Dihedrals

**On June 30, a male climber (age 40) was attempting Helium Woman (5.9) when he fell and impacted the ground, fracturing both of his ankles.** He had stick-clipped the second bolt and had climbed up and right to a point between the second and the third bolt when he asked his belayer (age unknown) to “take.” He waited for slack to be removed, then let go of the rock with the expectation of a short lead fall, but instead fell to the ground. The quickdraw had come unclipped from the second bolt during the fall and was found by the climber underneath him after he landed. It is believed it was still attached to the rope. (Source: Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office Search and Rescue.)

#### **ANALYSIS**

It seems likely that one of two possibilities occurred. First, the upper carabiner of the quickdraw might have been insufficiently clipped (nose clipped) to the second bolt. This can occur when tape or a stick is used to keep the carabiner gate open for stick-clipping. After stick-clipping a bolt, always visually confirm that the carabiner is properly attached to the bolt hanger and the gate is completely shut.

The other possibility (considered most likely) is the rope rotated the upper carabiner in such a way that it levered against the bolt hanger and unclipped as the climber moved to the right and/or the belayer took in slack. Assembling quickdraws with both carabiner gates oriented in the same direction and clipping draws so the gates are oriented away from the direction of travel will minimize the chances of a carabiner gate levering open against a bolt hanger. When there is only one bolt between you and a long ground fall on a sport climb (as when stick-clipping the second bolt), consider using a quickdraw with two locking carabiners for that crucial clip. (Source: Deschutes County SAR and the Editors.)

**Images**

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