



AAC Publications

Ground Fall From Anchors – Miscommunication

Utah, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Coffin Buttress

On March 11 a 27-year-old man led C.P.O.D., a 5.11- crack climb. None of his companions wanted to follow the climb, and since it traverses to the right, the climber decided it would be easiest to descend and then reascend the pitch on top-rope to clean it. However, the diagonal climb would have made rappelling difficult, and he was reluctant to simply lower because he worried the rough rock would abrade his rope.

Instead, he asked one of his friends to tie into the belayer's end of the rope (the strand running through the protection on the route) to weight it. Using this counter-balance, the climber planned to rappel the other strand of rope to the ground. However, the climber on the ground was relatively inexperienced and did not clearly understand the technique he'd been asked to perform. Instead of tying into and weighting the lead rope, he weighted the strand hanging free from the anchor. The climber above had already installed his rappel device on this strand and did not notice the mistake that had been made below. When he unclipped from the anchor and leaned back, he fell about 50 feet to the ground, pulling the other end of the rope through the gear and the anchor.

Salt Lake County SAR responded and lowered the climber down 800 feet of rough terrain in a litter. The climber had five spinal fractures but no neurological damage.

ANALYSIS

When climbing with beginners or unfamiliar partners, it's best to avoid unorthodox techniques such as this. When unusual steps become necessary, they need to be explained clearly and then double-checked (visually, if possible) by an experienced climber before they are trusted. (Sources: Online report by the climber and the Editors.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Online Report by the climber and The Editors
Publication	ANAM
Volume	11
Issue	71
Page	87
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Accident reports