



AAC Publications

Fall On Rock – Inexperience, No Helmet

North Carolina, Pilot Mountain State Park, Black Rain Wall

On November 1 at approximately 2 p.m., my partner and I were climbing in the Little Amphitheater when two climbers came around the trail in a hurry and obvious state of distress. Climber 1 (male, early 20s) was shirtless with his hands on his head and blood streaming down his head and face.

There were numerous abrasions on his torso. I immediately lowered my climbing partner to the ground, and a nearby pair of climbers came over to assist. One of them was a doctor. I retrieved my first-aid kit from my pack and the doctor donned gloves and attended to Climber 1's head injury. He had a severe laceration on his scalp but seemed alert and responsive. Very eager to get to the hospital, Climber 1 and Climber 2, his belayer (male, early 20s), were still wearing climbing shoes and had left all of their gear behind. My partner and I retrieved their walking shoes and offered to collect their gear while they went to the hospital.

The two had been attempting Black Rain, a 5.9 sport route. Earlier in the day, we had climbed the same route, which has six bolts and a large intermediate ledge. Many of the routes that day were wet from recent rains and mist. While we were able to send the route, we struggled to find good stances on the slippery rock, and my hand popped off several times, resulting in moderate lead falls.

ANALYSIS

Based on what we saw when we retrieved their gear, Climber 1's fall occurred above the ledge while attempting to clip the fourth bolt. Based on his description, he fell while clipping, landed on the ledge and struck his head (he was not wearing a helmet), then fell off the ledge. While cleaning their gear we noticed that several of the quickdraws were not clipped in the safest manner, including one that was back clipped. Overall, we got the sense that these two climbers were inexperienced and did not understand the risks inherent in climbing. Weather and conditions can greatly increase the difficulty of climbs and should always be considered in route choice. (Source: Alexander "Sasha" Timkovich.)

Images

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