



AAC Publications

Fall On Rock – Inexperience, Inadequate Protection

North Carolina, Linville Gorge Wilderness, The Daddy

On Saturday, October 27, a trio of climbers (James, Markus, and Jason), all from the Atlanta area, arrived at the base of the Daddy (5.6), located in the Amphitheater. Jason (46) was a relatively new trad climber being mentored by James, who was the most experienced of the three. Jason had experience in climbing gyms.

Jason stated, “I took the lead on the first pitch, since it appeared to be an easy climb. We weren’t planning to return to the base of Daddy, so we were carrying everything up with us. In hindsight, I was carrying a lot more weight than I was accustomed to, and it likely threw off my balance.

“I tied in and started to climb, with Markus belaying. Approximately 10 feet up, I started to look for somewhere to set my first pro. I saw a really good spot that required just one more move. As I moved upward, my right foot slipped. Next thing I knew, I was falling. Markus was spotting me—I never put in my first piece, so I was never actually on belay—and he caught me as best he could and sat me down on the ground. He and James quickly looked me over, but I knew things weren’t good when I saw bone.”

Landing on uneven ground caused Jason’s foot to roll, resulting in an open fracture of the lower leg. The group attempted unsuccessfully to use a cell phone to call 911, and then James was able to make contact with hikers on the ridge above who called for medical assistance. Because of his injury and location, a helicopter rescue was required. Jason was managed for 4.5 hours and had to be moved 300 meters downhill to a better pickoff point. However, rescuers noted that if the helicopter had not been used, the evacuation would have required an estimated 14 hours.

ANALYSIS

Jason noted: “Next time I’ll place protection earlier, especially when the ground below the climb is as uneven as it is at the base of the Daddy. Also, we’ll never overload the lead climber with gear. The followers can carry the leader’s extra gear. (Sources: Jason Januzelli and James Robinson and Adrian Hurst of Burke County Rescue.)

Images

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