



AAC Publications

Leader Fall On Rock – Off-Route, Insufficient Protection

Canada, Alberta, Bow Valley, Goat Mountain

A party of two attempted Coire Dubh Intégral (500m, 5.7 WI3) on Goat Mountain on November 16.

This is a multi-pitch ice route that leads to an upper face climbed mostly on rock and snow. The pair had left early in the day but took longer than expected. At about 6 p.m. they found themselves 100 meters from the top. Route-finding is notoriously difficult in this area, and the pair chose a finish to the right of the regular finish. As the leader was starting the final rock pitch, the climber fell. There was no protection placed at that point, so the climber hit a large sloping ledge and then tumbled past the belayer down a gully. The climber was unconscious after the fall and had serious injuries (unspecified in the report).

The partner immediately called 911 with a cell phone to request a rescue. Crews attempted to reach the pair from above that night, but high winds and fresh snow prevented a rescue. The two thus spent the night huddled on a ledge in -20°C to -15°C weather. At first light, a helicopter and crew flew to the scene and were able to heli-sling the climbers off the route to a waiting ambulance.

ANALYSIS

The climbers were fairly new to alpine climbing and as a result were moving slower than expected. They were traveling light, but they did have a couple of down jackets and some winter clothing. A shelter of some sort (such as a tarp) to retain some warmth would have helped significantly. Despite the cold night, both climbers were only mildly hypothermic. (Source: Kananaskis Country Incident Report.)

Images

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