



## AAC Publications

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### **Leader Fall On Mixed Climb – Poor Protection**

Canada, Ontario, Orient Bay

**I WAS ICE CLIMBING with two partners in the Orient Bay corridor near Nipigon over a long weekend in March.** My accident occurred on the second “pitch” on what appears to be an unnamed mixed dihedral to the right of the Right Stuff in the Amy R area. One partner led a short ice ramp up to a fairly large ledge. We switched leads and I started up the somewhat chossy dihedral. I placed two cams down low and off to the side (maybe four to six feet above the belay) to keep me from falling all the way to the ground should something happen. The first real protection possibility on the route appeared to be a horizontal crack about 15 feet up. I never made it. I found a (seemingly) solid right tool placement in a crack and then tested a left hand hold at about the same elevation. The rock failed my test pull, dislodged, and also released a bit of debris that was retaining my right tool placement. I fell and hit the base of the corner, slightly higher than the belay, and broke my right ankle on impact. I eventually slid down and stopped pretty much right next to my partners.

One partner called 911, and while she was on the phone, I figured out that I also had broken my right wrist, because it stopped functioning while I was untying my ropes. My partners lowered me to the ground to wait for a rescue. A local doctor was climbing nearby and heard the sirens, and this doc, bless his heart, carried a syringe of morphine in his first-aid kit, which made the wait much more pleasant. Through some rigging and brute force, the rescuers extracted me from the scene. At the hospital in Nipigon, they reset my ankle dislocation, and then I was transferred by ambulance to Thunder Bay and admitted for surgery in the wee hours of March 12. Since then I’ve had several more surgeries on my right ankle and right wrist, and unfortunately I’ve learned I have early onset arthritis and will walk with a limp.

### **ANALYSIS**

The two pieces I placed above the ledge were only slightly higher and off to the side of the belay. There wasn’t much opportunity for good gear up to the point where I fell. Attempting this somewhat chossy pitch probably wasn’t the smartest choice to begin with. Many of the locations where I’ve ice and mixed climbed are complete junk for rock climbing, but once everything freezes in place you just climb away. In short, it was a bit of an error in judgment and probably a bit of bad luck and just some of the inherent dangers of participating in this sport. (Source: Jason Cook.)

## Images



The climber on an unnamed mixed route in the Amy R area just before he fell when tool placements in loose rock failed to hold.

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