



AAC Publications

Ground Fall – Inexperience, Inadequate Belay

Arizona, The Pit, Mall Wall

On October 28, Zachary Dreher (23) had just passed the last bolt on Bluto Tastes an Olive (5.10a sport) when he fell. His belayer (female, 22) lost control of the belay, and Zachary took a 38-foot ground fall. The belayer was using an ATC-style device. The belayer had rope burns on her right hand, and Zachary suffered a broken right pelvis and fractured L1 vertebra. He was not wearing a helmet.

ANALYSIS

Zachary stated that his partner was very inexperienced and he should have done more instruction before allowing her to belay on her own. Whenever teaching someone to belay, it is a good idea to have another climber act as a backup belayer, holding the brake strand of the rope behind the belayer and reinforcing essential techniques, such as the importance of always maintaining a hand on the brake strand. According to the Coconino County Sheriff's Office, the climber weighed approximately twice as much as the belayer, and she was pulled off her feet before losing control of the rope.

(Sources: Zachary Dreher, Coconino County Sheriff's Office, and the Editors.)

Images

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