



AAC Publications

Leader Fall Onto Ledge – Off-Route, Inadequate Protection

California, Lake Tahoe Area, Sugarloaf

On August 3, I (female, 20) was leading Scheister, a three-pitch 5.7 trad route at Sugarloaf. On the third pitch, I climbed about 25 feet above the belay before realizing I had gone the wrong way. I had only placed one nut, clipped to the rope with a short quickdraw. While downclimbing to correct my mistake, I grabbed the nut and weighted it. It immediately blew out, and I landed on a big ledge about ten feet below. I could tell my right foot was broken; it would not support my weight.

My partner found an anchor using two bolts on a nearby climb and we rappelled to the next bolted anchor and then to the ground. He went first and put me on a fireman's belay each time. I was able to crawl 400 meters down the steep trail to my car and drive home. I had a cuboid bone fracture in my right foot that required surgery.

ANALYSIS

Before I weighted the nut, I noticed that it had moved a little out of its placement, likely due to movement of the rope. A longer sling might have prevented this from occurring. I gave it a tug and it did not move, so I assumed it would hold my full weight, even though the placement no longer looked perfect. An additional gear placement may have prevented me from hitting the ledge. The whole need to downclimb could have been avoided if I had studied the topo better and found the correct line before climbing. (Source: Katarina Owens.)

Images

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