



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Inadequate Protection, No Helmet

California, Tahquitz, West Face

On July 28, a male climber (25) was leading the route Fingertrip (5.7) and fell when he was about 45 feet up the first pitch. Nearby climbers, many with medical and rescue training, heard the fall and quickly arrived on scene. They noted that three pieces had pulled out, including two nuts and a number 2 Camalot. A large nut had caught the climber's fall. None of the pieces that pulled had been extended, and a fixed piton on the route was not clipped.

The climber inverted during the fall and impacted a rock just above the ground. He sustained an open lower leg fracture and injuries to his face, and he lost consciousness, which he regained after being lowered to the ground. He was not wearing a helmet. (Sources: Greg Davis and online report from another climber on the scene.)

ANALYSIS

This route trends to the left along a downward-facing crack. In such scenarios, cams often are more forgiving of less-than-perfect placements than nuts are. Regardless, always keep in mind the direction of pull while placing protection. Extending each piece with a quickdraw or sling can stop the rope from shifting a piece out of its optimal placement. The fixed piton that was not clipped was old but still might have held a fall. A helmet might have minimized the climber's head injuries. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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