



AAC Publications

Lowering Error – Inexperience

Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon, Sushi Slab

On July 27 at 2:18 p.m., the Alpine Rescue Team responded to the report of a fallen climber (male, early 20s) at Sushi Slab. The climber was discovered with a lower leg injury and unable to walk. Due to the location of the crag (several hundred feet up a steep gully filled with loose rock), the climber was loaded into a litter and a technical evacuation was completed down the gully to the roadway. At the hospital, a lower leg fracture was confirmed.

Prior to the fall, the climbers were attempting Dragon Roll (5.5 sport climb). The male climber had successfully led the pitch, set up a top-rope anchor, and was in the process of being lowered. As he was removing the quickdraw from the highest bolt before the anchor, his belay partner lost her footing, causing her to lose control of the brake strand. The climber fell approximately 40 feet. The belayer was using an ATC-style belay device.

ANALYSIS

The pair of climbers, a 20-year-old male and 13-year-old female, were brother and sister and had been climbing in the gym regularly. They had not climbed outside together prior to this incident. Though a climbing gym provides a reasonably safe environment to practice climbing skills, the natural environment presents risks that novice climbers may overlook (weather, route conditions) or underappreciate (importance of adequate belay stances). Additionally, assisted-braking devices, though not foolproof, can offer an extra margin of safety when belaying and lowering. (Source: Curt Honcharik and Steve Wilson, Alpine Rescue Team.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Curt Honcharik and Steve Wilson, Alpine Rescue Team
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	73
Page	60
Copyright Date	2020
Article Type	Accident reports