



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Rope Behind Leg, No Helmet

North Carolina, Pilot Mountain State Park, The Parking Lot

During the afternoon of May 6, ranger J. Anderson received a call reporting a fallen climber. When Anderson found the patient, Matthew Starkey, he was walking out, holding a shirt on the right side of his head and covered in blood. However, he was conscious and alert. After ensuring the patient's condition was not worsening, Anderson accompanied him on the hike out. Medical assessment revealed a two-to three-inch laceration on the right side of his skull and light rope burns on his leg.

Starkey explained to rescuers that he had been lead climbing outdoors for his first time on the route Chicken Bone (5.8 sport). As he was nearing the third bolt, he lost his grip on a hold and fell. His rope was behind his leg, and this caused him to flip upside down and hit his head on a ledge below. Starkey said he was unsure, but felt like he had "blacked out." He was not wearing a helmet. (Source: Incident Report from Pilot Mountain State Park.)

ANALYSIS

This climb has been the scene of numerous accidents over the past couple of years, mostly involving inexperienced climbers. Avoid getting your feet and legs between the rock and the rope. A fall in this position may result in the leg snagging the rope and flipping the climber upside down. While many sport leaders pass on wearing a helmet, this accident is a good example of its usefulness. Leading easier climbs can increase the risk for injury, as they often tend to be lower angle and/or have ledges that a falling climber could hit. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

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