



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock – Inexperience, Inadequate Preparation**

North Carolina, Linville Gorge Wilderness Area, The Amphitheater

**On October 5, an organized college group divided into two parties to expedite climbing the Daddy (500 feet, 5.6).** The first group (A) summited and then hiked out to the parking area. Prior to starting, the groups had agreed that if the second group (B) didn't make it to the parking area by 10 p.m., the first group would go back and look for them.

At approximately 6 p.m., while following the last pitch, a male climber (25) fell about 15 feet onto a pyramid-shaped rock, landing on the back of his right knee and lower thigh. He was the last climber in a group of eight students and instructors who had previously topped out. Around 10 p.m., Group A returned to look for the second group, and while en route they received a text from Group B reporting that there had been an incident with injuries. About the same time, a call was made to Burke County SAR indicating that an injured climber was stranded near the top of the Daddy. The over-all group leader (who was with Group A) descended to check on the injured climber, before reascending and making contact with search and rescue.

A Burke County SAR member and Burke County EMS Special Ops medic arrived at the informal trail above the Amphitheater and made voice contact with the patient, who was about 90 feet below the top. The rescuers immediately requested further high-angle rescue resources. The weather was wet, foggy, and chilly, with a breeze of about 10 mph. SAR member James Robinson rappelled to the patient and found him partially covered with a plastic poncho and cold and wet. Robinson assisted the climber out of his wet layers and into a warming bag with heat packs. A tarp was used for shelter.

The climber had sustained a muscular injury to the upper right leg that prevented him from bearing weight. Both rescuer and patient were anchored to the wall and spent the remainder of the night on the ledge while resources were assembled. The patient's leg was splinted.

In the early morning, rescuers performed a 3:1 hoist, with Robinson ascending a fixed line alongside the patient to keep him from impacting the rock face. The injured climber was assisted to the parking area and evacuated to a local hospital.

### **ANALYSIS**

The final pitch of the Daddy requires intentional gear placements and an attentive belay to protect the second. A combination of factors contributed to this climber's relatively long fall and injury: 1) an inexperienced belayer, 2) slack in the rope, 3) the climber's weight (approximately 250 pounds) and a narrow rope (8.9mm), both of which would have increased rope stretch, and 4) haste due to approaching darkness.

Climbers venturing into Linville Gorge Wilderness should carry enough equipment to spend the night. This group did not have the necessary gear or clothing for night-time exposure, nor enough food or water, and this affected their decision-making. (Sources: James Robinson, Corey Winstead, and Adrian Hurst, Burke County SAR.)

**Images**

## Article Details

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