



## AAC Publications

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### Leader Ground Fall – Unable to Clip, Inexperience

Texas, Reimer's Ranch, Hand Beyond Wall

**On May 26, I was climbing with a less experienced partner at Reimer's Ranch, an area unfamiliar to both of us.** After comfortably completing a 5.10 route, I gave my partner (male, 33) the option of leading or top-roping the adjacent route Monkey Boy (5.10c). He decided to lead the route and clipped the first bolt easily. He continued up, and at about 20 feet, he grabbed a jug above his head with the second bolt right next to it. He pulled out slack, attempted to make the clip, then dropped the rope to readjust his hands. This happened several times before he suddenly fell to the ground, injuring his back and knocking out a tooth. Afterward, he said he felt secure but his hands were sweaty and slipped off due to the heat, humidity, and texture of the limestone.

#### ANALYSIS

The climber had only been lead climbing outdoors once before. As such, I think we should have stuck with climbs that were familiar or easier, so he could gain experience on comfortable climbs. As the belayer, I struggled with whether to give or take in slack when the climber was attempting to make the clip I believe if I had taken in more of the slack, I may have been able to catch his fall before he hit the ground. I didn't do this because I did not want him to struggle with the rope while clipping. I also think better communication between the climber and belayer could have helped. **[Editor's Note:** This is a very short wall, and it would be difficult for a belayer to keep the climber from hitting the ground in a fall at the second bolt as it's described.

The area between the first and second clip is often the most dangerous zone on a sport climb, as a ground fall is possible. There are several options to help mitigate this risk. Stick-clipping the second bolt (if possible) can lessen the chance of a ground fall. In heavily concentrated route areas, bolts may be accessed while lowering from an adjacent route, so the draws can be preplaced and the rope preclipped through the first and possibly the second bolt. (Sources: The belayer and the Editors.)

**Images**

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