



AAC Publications

LEDGE FALL ON ROCK – Inadequate Protection

Utah, Wasatch Range, Little Cottonwood Canyon, Pentapitch Area

Two 26-year-old males were involved in a rock climbing accident on the morning of July 12, while attempting a variation to the right of the second lead on Pentapitch. According to the belayer (climber A), he had led the first pitch of Pentapitch and then brought up his partner (climber B), who was planning on leading Sasquatch, the 5.9+ trad variation to the second pitch. It was B's first time climbing in Little Cottonwood Canyon, but he had said he was comfortable climbing on granite.

Climber B placed his first piece, a number 4 Camalot, about five feet up the route, and took a small fall about a foot above that piece. He took a short rest, continued climbing, and, in the thin section of the climb, placed a DMM number 7 offset nut about eight feet above his last piece. B continued up and was trying to place a third piece of gear, another eight or so feet above the DMM nut, when he fell. The offset nut blew out, and although A pulled in some rope as B was falling, the leader dropped an estimated 40 feet and hit a ledge about five feet below the belay station.

Climber B had a severely dislocated ankle and some back injuries. Climber A tied off the fallen climber and gave himself a long leash from the anchor to move down to B. Climber B was conscious and alert, and he called 911 for help at about 10:45 a.m. Climber A tied a tourniquet around B's ankle and got on the phone with paramedics to guide them to the scene. With B's permission, he lowered climber B to the ground and then rappelled to join him. Two other climbers joined them, one of whom was an emergency department doctor, who treated B's injuries while A went to the road to direct responders. At around noon, Climber B was short-hauled from the scene by helicopter, then transported to the hospital, where surgeons repaired the damage.

ANALYSIS

According to climber A, the medium size offset nut that pulled out was not set deeply enough. Only about 3 4 mm of surface area at the edge of the nut showed damage from the fall (less than half the width of this nut). The climb may have been beyond the leading ability of the climber, as he had already fallen below the start of the most difficult climbing on the pitch. Protection opportunities are plentiful on this pitch, and more frequent placements could have prevented B from hitting the ledge. (Sources: Climber A and the Editors.)

Images

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