



AAC Publications

Ground Fall – Failed to Clip Second Bolt

Virginia, Hidden Valley

On April 6, a climber (age 22) was leading the sport route Axis Bold as Butta (5.11a) at Hidden Valley, a crag near Abingdon. She had led the route several times previously. The first bolt, 11 feet off the ground, was stick-clipped. There is a good stance about a foot above the first bolt, and taller climbers are able to make the next clip from here. Because of her height, the climber was unable to reach the second bolt from this stance, and as she moved up, her foot slipped. Although her fall was slowed by her belayer, she landed on the ground after swinging under an overhang at the start of the climb. She sustained a fractured left calcaneus and a fractured nose.

ANALYSIS

The area around the second bolt is often the most vulnerable zone of a sport climb because a slip before making the second clip can result in a ground fall. Stick-clipping the second bolt is sometimes an option. In areas with heavily concentrated routes, bolts on one climb may be accessed from adjacent routes. (In this case, lowering from the 5.8 route beside Axis would have allowed the climbers to hang a quickdraw and/or clip the rope at the second bolt before attempting the lead.) A third option is the “stiffy” quickdraw, which has a long, rigid dogbone for out-of-reach bolts. This is available commercially as the Kong Panic, or it can be fashioned at home; an article in Climbing magazine (available online) describes one method for this. (Source: Jeff Sanders.)

Images

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