



## AAC Publications

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### Fall on Rock — Fixed Protection Pulled Out

Colorado, Boulder, Flatirons, Seal Rock

**I have been frequenting the Flatirons for climbing since moving to Boulder five years ago.** In the fall of 2020, I started projecting Primate, a 5.13b route at Seal Rock with a mix of bolt and traditional protection. I visited the route four times and climbed it about three times per session. I was very close to sending, and on November 8, I paired up with a friend who was visiting from out of town—she was up for trying the same route.

The route begins with easier climbing that I used to warm up, as the crag has few moderates. I began the initial 5.11 section, clipping a bolt and then a fixed nut. Once my feet were level with the fixed nut, one foot unexpectedly slipped, causing a barn-door motion that led to a fall. The nut held for an instant and then ripped out of the rock. I fell about 20 feet and landed on my back, directly on the belayer's rope stack. I was unable to breathe for about one minute, but then was able to stand up and eventually walk back to the car with my partner. I had narrowly avoided landing on a pointed rock next to the belay. A visit to urgent care confirmed I had luckily avoided any serious injury.

#### ANALYSIS

I did not properly assess the security of the fixed nut on this route. I had seen a dozen others climb the route and clip this gear without inspection, and therefore I assumed it was trustworthy. The rock in this section is very friable, and I believe this contributed both to my foot slipping and to the gear pulling out.

Since this incident, I have been assessing fixed gear more thoroughly. I have discovered open quick links on fixed quickdraws and fixed draws with decade-old nylon slings, and I've had a hanger detach from a bolt while climbing. I hope others will be more careful in assessing the condition of fixed gear on their climbs, even if they have done a route a dozen times. (Source: Patrick Hardy.)

**Images**

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