



AAC Publications

Lowering Anchor — Rope Too Short, Complacency

Montana, Paradise Valley, Allenspur Main Crag

On March 20, a pair of climbers (Climber 1, male, 28, and Climber 2, female, 27, both intermediate-level climbers) headed to the Main Crag at Allenspur and packed their “all around” 50-meter rope, since that length is adequate for most (but not all) of the routes at the crag. They chose Climbing Club (5.8), a 90-foot sport route, for a warm-up.

Climber 1 tied in, climbed to the top without issues, and signaled Climber 2 to lower him. As Climber 1 was nearing the base of the climb, the rope end slipped through the belayer’s Grigri. Climber 1 estimates he fell about 18 feet to the ground (although he has no recollection of the actual fall). The rope end had not been tied to the rope bag, nor was a stopper knot tied in the end.

A call to 911 brought emergency services to the crag, and Climber 1 was packaged into a Stokes litter and lowered a short distance down the hill to a waiting ambulance. He sustained a concussion, two fractured lumbar transverse processes (L4 and L5), a minor fracture of the left scapula, laceration of the right elbow, and pulled muscles in his right shoulder.

ANALYSIS

This accident occurred through a series of preventable errors and complacency while doing a relatively easy warm-up. Climber 1 stated: “The 50-meter rope had never been an issue before at this crag and was typically tied off to the bag when crag climbing [thereby closing the system]. Climber 1 set off under these assumptions. Recent gym use had led the pair to flipping the rope often [to allow each end to rest between falls], and they had left the rope untied during this trip to the crag.” In addition, the belayer was positioned below a neighboring route, adding about 10 feet to the effective length of the climb. (Source: Climber 1.)

Images

Article Details

Author	Climber 1
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	74
Page	62
Copyright Date	2021
Article Type	Accident reports