



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection

New York, Shawangunks, The Trapps

On August 30, I (male, 59) started up Pas de Deux (5.8 PG-13). I placed two or three good cams in the first 20 feet of the climb. Above that, I saw a couple of places I could have placed cams, not far above my highest piece, but decided to move higher before placing another one. Looking up, I could see horizontal corrugations, but upon reaching them they turned out not to be deep enough to accept cams. At roughly 35 feet, I first tried to place a blue Metolius TCU, but the placement was poor. I then tried to place a purple TCU in the same crack, a little to the left. I gave it a tug and it popped out, which caused me to lose my balance and fall. I flipped upside down and fell about 25 feet. When the rope came taut, the back of my helmet hit the wall as I neared the ground.

I'd abraded my right hand and finger, bruised my pelvis, and sustained a deep cut on my elbow. I remained conscious and alert and was greatly relieved to have sustained only minor injuries. The helmet seemed to have absorbed the impact to my head. A number of Mohonk Preserve rangers were climbing nearby and immediately attended to me. After the fall I was woozy, with low blood pressure and a slow pulse. I was carried to the carriage road in a litter and taken to the hospital to be checked out.

ANALYSIS

I was comfortable standing on good footholds for about five minutes while attempting to place various small cams and finally the purple one that pulled out. When I tested it, I let my guard down a bit in a dangerous situation, when I should have been as careful and alert as if I were free soloing, given the distance above my last good pro. I owe huge thanks to my belayer Nathan (whom I'd just met through Mountain Project) for running backward from his stance as I fell, removing just enough slack from the system to prevent a much more serious injury. (Source: Christopher Maher.)

Images

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