



## AAC Publications

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### **Loose Rock at Base of Route**

Arizona, Phoenix, South Mountain Preserve

**On November 11, Joshua Brown (23) and a partner (22) were climbing in an undeveloped area that required 3rd- and 4th-class scrambling up a loose slope to access the base of the crag.** The pair finished a ground-up, trad first ascent and began packing to hike out in the dark. As they did so, a microwave oven-size granite boulder dislodged from a rock pile next to the belay stance. The boulder landed atop Brown's foot. As a climbing guide with an EMT-B certification, Brown quickly assessed his injury as a fractured metatarsal.

It took about an hour to descend the slope and hike the one mile back to the car, during which Brown suffered secondary injuries (abrasions and lacerations) from falling several times.

### **ANALYSIS**

Brown is a very experienced climber and guide. He and his partner (a professional climber with 10 years of experience) are proficient desert adventurers and aware of the risks of climbing in an undeveloped area. While they were concerned about loose rock in the belay area, the block that fell on Brown's foot appeared solid, and in fact they had used it as a place to sit. "We overestimated (the block's) stability, as it managed to dislodge from just walking below it," Brown said. Physically testing the rock likely would have revealed the hazard: "I'm confident that us trying to move it would have made its instability apparent." (Source: Joshua Brown.)

**Images**

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