



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Off Route, Exceeding Abilities

Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon, Anarchy Wall

In mid-November, “Bill,” a climber in his mid-30s, took a serious leader fall after going off route while attempting a sport route called Power Trip (5.12a).

According to a witness, Bill had mentioned climbing 5.12 in the gym but was shaky upon starting the route. He was part of a large group accompanied by dogs, and the witness was concerned about the group’s ability to climb without distraction. Bill drifted off route, missed a clip, and became very run-out. When he fell, his right foot was behind the rope, causing him to flip upside down and pendulum. His head impacted first. He lowered and after a short period began exhibiting signs of mild concussion and complaining about neck pain. He departed the crag. It is unknown whether he received medical attention.

ANALYSIS

Crowding at a crag degrades clear communication and creates an environment in which peer pressure and overconfidence can foment hazardous conditions. These circumstances may have resulted in Bill continuing to attempt the climb even though he was off route. His belayer caught the fall as well as could be expected given the circumstances—Bill fell down half of the route while upside down. Thankfully, even though the route was short and often climbed as a warmup for this difficult crag, Bill was wearing a helmet. His helmet was visibly damaged but did not crack. Had he not been wearing the helmet, his injuries may have been far more severe. (Source: Anonymous.)

Images

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