



AAC Publications

Ground Fall — Off Route, No Protection

Kentucky, Red River Gorge, Long Wall

On March 12, after onsighting Mailbox (5.8, trad) and Rock Wars (5.10a, trad)—both fantastic routes—my friends and I wanted to continue climbing on something easier. We found a climb called Long Wall Chimney (5.7, trad). I (male, 22) racked up and checked Mountain Project for info on the route.

I noticed a giant loose chockstone at the start that seemed like it might be necessary to pull on to get established in the crack. I opted for a start on the face to the left to avoid the chockstone. The move was extremely committing (almost like pulling a roof with a mantel onto the face). I made one or two moves and found myself stuck. I could not traverse right into the crack, as it would involve using the awful chockstone, and I couldn't move up because the rock was featureless. At this point, I was about 10 feet off the ground with no gear placed. I began to downclimb and almost slipped. I decided the only option was to jump, so my friends cleared the landing and spotted me for the fall.

I committed to the jump and landed perfectly flat-footed on my left foot. Due to having so much gear on my harness and landing with all the weight on one foot, I immediately felt an awful shooting pain in my entire foot. I fell over and lay on my back to see if the pain would dissipate. I removed my climbing shoes and other gear and waited. About 30 minutes passed, and the foot was now swelling quickly. I couldn't put any weight on it, so the only option was to carry me out. My friend, and coworker at the time, Diego, picked me up and carried me like a backpack about 80 percent of the Long Wall access trail. I was able to crab walk on the steeper sections.

I found out about a week later that I had a Lisfranc fracture (the space between the big and second toe) in my left foot. I couldn't walk for three months, and I still have lingering pain despite months of PT. All of this was because I did the wrong start to a 5.7, and with it being a trad route, I had no way to "take."

ANALYSIS

I learned from the accident to always check and double-check the correct start of a route if unsure (especially true for unprotected trad). Later, I discovered from a comment on Mountain Project that another climber had fallen six feet to the ground while attempting the same start to avoid the chockstone. They also commented that the rest of the party used the chockstone without an issue. (Source: Adam Gallimore.)

Editor's Note: According to another climber at the crag that day, the chockstone was stable and used by other parties. The climber may have been able to reach a stance to assess the stone before making his decision. The takeaway is, it's better to avoid the route altogether than resort to an alternative start that's proven to cause—in this case at least—lasting injury.

Images

Article Details

Author	Adam Gallimore
Publication	ANAM
Volume	12
Issue	75
Page	60
Copyright Date	2022
Article Type	Accident reports