



## AAC Publications

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### **Ground Fall – Nut Placement in Loose Rock**

New Mexico, Truth or Consequences Area, Percha Creek

**I, Jessica Hans (female, 33), had a significant ground fall on Barber Shop Cafe (5.8+) at Percha Creek in November. I ascended 15 to 20 feet and placed a number 5 Black Diamond Stopper in the roof section as my first piece of pro.** I continued up another foot and then felt uneasy about the moves beyond the roof. I downclimbed back to the nut, which I thought was a bombproof placement, and had my partner (male, 33) take, so I could assess my next moves.

Upon weighting the nut, the entire rock came loose and blew out from the wall. I fell along with a watermelon-size boulder and my gear. I fell approximately ten feet, hit a ledge, fell a further five to ten feet, and landed sideways on my left ankle.

I was in shock for five to ten minutes. My partner and I deliberated calling SAR for assistance, but after assessing my injury we determined the ankle was the only really damaged area, and I was able to hop on one foot to get out of the creek area. I went to the emergency department in Las Cruces immediately, where they found nothing broken, and although the sprain was significant, there were no tears in ligaments or tendons. I was in a boot for one and a half months, then a brace. Mobility has improved considerably, and I was back on rock (leading sport, but no trad yet) after three months.

(Source: Jessica Hans.)

### **ANALYSIS**

Loose rock is a hazard in almost all climbing areas. Hans says, “Ultimately, I believe the accident happened because of a poor placement in loose rock. As much as I had tested the quality of the rock before placing the gear, I didn’t count on hidden fissures in that feature.”

While it’s true that the immediate cause of this accident was the rock breaking and the gear pulling out, placing another piece of gear below the nut might have prevented the ground fall. An informal rule in trad climbing states: Always have two pieces between you and the hospital. Furthermore, a nut is not a multi-directional piece of gear; therefore, a cam is often advisable to use as a first piece.

(Source: The Editors.)

## Images

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