



AAC Publications

Long Leader Fall – Protection Pulled Out

North Carolina, Pisgah National Forest, Looking Glass Rock

Early in the afternoon on January 14, Forrest Lin (28) and Catherine Chee (28) began climbing The Nose (4 pitches, 5.8) on Looking Glass Rock. Both climbers reached the top of the 110-foot first pitch. Once the anchor and belay were established, Lin took the lead. The 90-foot second pitch moves right off the belay and follows a quartz dike to a bolted belay.

Lin described what happened next: “I became unintentionally off route and...tried to make my way back to the intended route, but the protection below was suspect. I got to a point where there was not very good protection about two feet below the dike. Here, I had placed a Black Diamond C4 cam (0.75) about knee height, but I knew it was not an ideal placement as I had only three lobes engaged. I stalled and thought through what I was going to do and decided to reach for the next hold. Unfortunately, I fell. The BD .75 popped and I continued to fall. As momentum continued to carry me, the next piece, a number 3 C4, came out. [The next piece], a nut I placed, ended up catching my fall.”

Lin fell approximately 100 feet. During his fall, he tumbled a couple of times and in the process struck his head, damaging his helmet. “Catherine was able to arrest my fall and immediately called my name, but I was unable to respond. After approximately five minutes of contemplating our situation, she decided I needed medical attention after noticing blood coming from a lacerated ear. Thankfully, she had cell service and made the call to search and rescue. Because she knew our exact location, rescue personnel were able to reach us in approximately 60 minutes.”

One of the first to arrive on the scene was Karsten Delap, a local guide and Transylvania County Rescue Squad member. He was able to climb to Lin and found him conscious. He secured and stabilized Lin and did a primary survey. During the survey, Delap noted a lacerated left ear, bloody nose, and a possible head injury. Delap was able to tandem-rappel with Lin to the ground. Transylvania Rescue Squad members were notified and requested the Mountain Area Medical Airlift helicopter (MAMA) for transport to Mission Memorial Hospital in Asheville.

Once rescuers arrived to aid Lin, Delap ascended to Chee and tandem-rappelled with her to the ground, where she was treated for mild hypothermia.

ANALYSIS

Lin commented:

(1) Guidebook: I own two North Carolina guidebooks and researched the route, and truly thought I was going the intended way. Unfortunately, once I realized I was off route, it became incredibly difficult to get back on track.

(2) Weather: The day that we went climbing, there was still some snow on the ground from snowfall earlier in the week. That day in particular was also relatively cold (mid-40s F), and it is reasonable to think that in the darker parts of the wall with no sunlight that it was slicker than normal.

(3) Gear Placement: This goes along with the first item: Because I was a little off route, the gear placement was less than ideal, with suspect rock. (Source: The Editors.)

Images



Looking Glass Rock. The unusual horizontal wrinkles called “eyebrows” create unique climbing and protection placements. The Nose is on the left side of the cliff (center of photo).

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