



## AAC Publications

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### Fall in Gym — Impalement

Washington, Northern Washington Climbing Gym

**On June 17, Brandon Frohbieter (34) was climbing unroped on an indoor wall about 12 feet off the floor. Although the route was equipped with an autobelay device, Frohbieter was not clipped to it.** His plan was to check out the moves in order to decide if he wanted to climb the entire route using the autobelay.

Routesetting was being done in an adjacent area, and the routesetters had used plastic fencing to cordon off the area. A vertical PVC pipe, commonly seen in gyms, held up the plastic ribbon tape that comprised the fencing.

Frohbieter liked the moves and decided to jump down, clip into the autobelay, and do the climb to the top. He jumped and was impaled by the PVC pipe.

Frohbieter recalled, "I looked down my right shoulder, and I just saw the ground, so I just kind of dropped from the wall. I just landed down straight on that pipe. I started screaming at the top of my lungs.

"Up until the moment it happened, I was just expecting to hit the ground," Frohbieter said. "And I had no idea what happened. I just knew that I was in excruciating pain. And something terrible had happened. And I couldn't really feel my bottom half, and I knew blood was pooling around."

Frohbieter was taken to a nearby emergency room. His extensive injuries included a fractured sacrum, coccyx, tibial plateau, and burst T7 vertebra.

### ANALYSIS

This improbable accident was met by some climbers with skepticism when Frohbieter initially posted the story at Mountain Project. Unfortunately, his accident and horrendous injuries were very much real. While climbing gyms are generally very safe, the unique aspects of our sport make any style or venue for ascent potentially dangerous. Situational awareness is beneficial even indoors. Despite his physical and financial distress, Frohbieter to his credit recognizes "the risk and the consequence" of climbing and has had only good things to say about the gym and its owner. (Sources: Brandon Frohbieter, Climbing.com.)

**Images**

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