



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Inadequate Protection

Wyoming, Grand Teton National Park, Disappointment Peak

On July 25, at 10:50 a.m., the Jenny Lake rangers received a report of an injured climber on Open Book (5.9) in Garnet Canyon. The reporting party told the ranger that Climber 1 (27) had taken a leader fall and had an open fracture to the left leg that was bleeding heavily, and the climber was potentially going into shock. The belayer was unable to lower the leader to the ground.

Based on subsequent investigation, Climber 1 had started up their second pitch, which began with an undercling and layback flake just above the belay. Climber 1 had placed a single piece of protection before falling. The protection pulled. Neither climber had clipped the lead rope to the anchor as a first piece of protection. Climber 2, who was belaying off his harness, had difficulty holding the fall. Climber 1 and Climber 2 had intermediate developed climbing skills.

Helicopter 35HX, with pilot Steve Wilson, flew a recon of the scene and landed two rangers in Garnet Meadows to start hiking to the base of the climb. The helicopter returned to the Lupine Meadows rescue cache at 11:45 a.m. and was rigged for short-haul. The pilot and spotter determined that a single rescuer could be safely inserted into the accident scene.

Once at the belay stance, the rescuer provided emergency medical care to stabilize Climber 1 and splinted the climber's legs for evacuation. The rescuer and Climber 1 were extracted by helicopter.

ANALYSIS

Open Book is a justifiably popular Teton classic. It also has some of the same hazards one would expect on a multipitch alpine rock climb, including tricky protection. In this case, placing an additional piece might have prevented such a long fall. Also, clipping the lead rope through a runner at the belay would have redirected the fall and made catching the fall easier. This is a standard practice among experienced trad climbers. (Sources: Ranger Ken Kreis, Grand Teton National Park, and the Editors.)

Images

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