



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock

Wyoming, Wind River, Haystack Mountain

On August 23, I (the Climber, 29) was leading the first pitch of Minor Dihedral (8 pitches, 5.9) when I got to a run-out slab section. I fell when I was 12 to 15 feet above my last cam. Due to the angle of the rock, I clipped a flake with my feet when falling, which caused my body to rotate. This led to me flip upside down, and I slammed head-first into the wall when the cam and rope arrested my fall. I broke my helmet and was knocked unconscious for approximately 30 seconds. I also suffered a deep gash in the back of my head.

After I came to, my partner lowered me to the belay, and with help from another party, got me safely back to flat ground. My partner had a Garmin inReach that we used to call for a helicopter evacuation. I suffered a concussion and a pinched nerve. All tests came back negative for skull fractures or brain damage.

ANALYSIS

I consider myself an experienced climber and have climbed long traditional routes in the alpine and on run-out terrain. My biggest lesson from this incident would be that, much like a tool needs to be sharpened, so do climbing skills. Although I was climbing something within my limits, I hadn't been trad climbing in almost four months prior to the accident. I was definitely rusty and was hopping on a route that had heads-up terrain. If I could change things, I would have eased into this trip instead of going for a route closer to my limit on the first day. Prepare for big objectives by dialing in on smaller routes leading up to a big trip. Also, I would likely be dead if I hadn't been wearing a helmet. (Source: The Climber.)

Images



The classic Minor Dihedral on the west face of Haystack Mountain. The climber in this incident fell from a run-out slab section of the 5.9 first pitch.

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