



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Loose Rock

Guernsey State Park, Red Clove Wall

On June 30, Climber 1 (female, 27) and Climber 2 (male, 25) were climbing at the Red Clove Wall at Guernsey, a sport climbing area in far eastern Wyoming. The female climber had at least a decade of rock climbing and mountaineering experience, and had worked as a climbing guide. The male's history included five years of climbing and mountaineering, and some experience guiding. After arriving at Guernsey, the climbers consulted Mountain Project and only then learned the area was known for somewhat chossy sedimentary rock. The climbers tried to avoid holds that appeared unstable.

This accident occurred as Climber 1 belayed Climber 2 on Deep Cuts (5.8-). Five feet below the anchors, Climber 2 grabbed a ledge (reported to be 10 inches thick) that broke off. Climber 1 moved into the wall and ducked, but was struck by the falling rock between the shoulder blades.

Climber 2 clipped a personal anchor to the last bolt and verbally checked on the belayer. She was able to lower him to the base, where they assessed her injuries and called 911 after she reported pain in her spine. After evacuation, she was diagnosed with fractured T3 and T4 vertebrae.

ANALYSIS

Less frequented climbing areas often hold loose rock and other hazards. The climbers reported no sign of weakness at the collapsed ledge. Both climbers wore helmets—a wise precaution, especially in an area known for unstable rock. (Sources: Climbers 1 and 2.)

Images

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