



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock — Failure to Test Hold, Protection Pulled**

Canada, Alberta, Jasper National Park, Hidden Valley

**On June 27, while climbing at Hidden Valley, my partner (Person 1) and I (Jonathan Reid, 30) selected an easy trad route from the guidebook. Skipper's Rib was two pitches and rated 5.6. Both of us had climbed in this area before.**

I tied in, partner-checked, and started climbing the first pitch, a 5.3 mixed gear/ piton/bolt-protected lead, with Person 1 belaying. There were no obvious gear placements at first.

At eight feet, I placed a purple 0.5 Camalot in a limestone crack. It cammed well, but the crack was full of small surface crystals, and the rock appeared unstable on one side. I continued climbing five feet above the cam and pulled on a juggy hold. I fully trusted the jug without checking it, and it pulled off the wall. I took a ground fall from 12 feet up, landed on my back, and flipped over and down another three feet. The 0.5 cam had pulled out of the crack with almost no resistance.

My helmet flew off after the initial impact. I sustained back abrasions, a scalp laceration on the top/back of the head, bruises on my right arm and back, and was winded. I was able to walk to the car and required two scalp sutures in the emergency department.

### **ANALYSIS**

My partner inspected the cam and placement right after I fell. There were obvious scars in the crack where the cam lobes had crushed the small surface crystals. The cam itself was intact. Though I recognized the placement was poor, I had not expected to fall on this easy pitch and placed the cam mostly for practice. In hindsight, there was a tree that could have been clipped three feet lower as a good first piece.

Given the established nature of the route, I also did not anticipate a hold would break so easily, and I should have tested the holds before trusting them. My helmet was very damaged and softened the impact but came off in the fall. The buckle was fine, but the chinstrap likely should have been tighter. As beginning trad climbers, both of us feel that, in the future, a bomber first piece of pro should be placed. Also, we won't underestimate a low-graded "popular" route and will test holds before trusting them. (Source: Jonathan Reid.)

**Images**

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