



AAC Publications

FATAL FALL ON THIRD-CLASS TERRAIN

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, The Bastille

On March 3, Thad Friday (48) fell while descending from the Bastille in Eldorado Canyon. He was an exceptionally experienced climber with big-wall free enchainments, big-wall aid solos in Yosemite, and first ascents in Greenland to his credit. On this day, Friday had rope-soloed the 300-foot tower. At the top, he had packed his rope and hardware to descend the airy walk-off. At some point he fell from third-class terrain to the bottom of the cliff.

ANALYSIS

Eldorado Canyon is notorious for heady climbing on loose rock and demanding terrain. These qualities extend into its approaches and descents. As the guidebook notes, “The descent from the Bastille is non-technical but very exposed in places,” following, “an exposed ledge system on the west side of the cliff, past a few short downclimbs.” It is most likely that Friday slipped on one of the slippery downclimbing sections, perhaps made even more awkward by his large pack. (Sources: Climbing.com, Eric Doub, and Pete Takeda.)

Images

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