



AAC Publications

LEADER FALL ON ROCK – Broken Foothold

North Carolina, Hanging Rock State Park, Moore's Wall

On March 5, Danny McCracken (61) and Pierre Dery (65) selected Scrambled Eggs (2 pitches, 5.5) as an easy and familiar warm-up climb. While leading, Danny placed gear every 15 to 20 feet. He was approximately 70 feet up when he got to a hands-off stance about 12 feet above his last piece. As he reached for some protection, the foothold supporting his left foot broke, sending him on a 20-foot fall. As he fell, his right foot struck an outcrop of rock, causing him to invert. He hit his head, but his helmet prevented any injury.

When asked by Pierre if he was okay, Danny responded “NO!” Pierre waited for Danny to regain some composure and reset his position before lowering him to the belay ledge. The pair discussed the situation and decided the leg injury did not appear to need immediate attention. (Danny was a former EMT.) Pierre lowered Danny to the ground and followed via rappel.

The climbers were able to get to their vehicle with the assistance of other climbers. They went to Durham, North Carolina, where Danny sought treatment at Duke University Hospital. He was diagnosed with a pilon fracture, a complex fracture of the tibia and fibula just above the ankle.

ANALYSIS

The climbers chose a climb with plenty of good protection. In hindsight, Danny said, “I could have placed gear closer together since there was a risk of contacting small ledges during a fall, and I should have maintained three points of contact while placing gear. Luckily, we were able to get off the climb without assistance.” (Source: Danny McCracken.)

Editor’s Note: Sadly, Danny McCracken died of natural causes in December. McCracken was one of the most influential volunteers at the American Alpine Club over the last decade; he led the club’s Southern Appalachian Section and helped form the hugely successful Triangle Chapter. He was a champion of education, helped teach hundreds of new climbers in his tenure, and was a significant part of bringing the AAC volunteer network into the modern era.

Images

Article Details

Author	Danny McCracken
Publication	ANAM
Volume	13
Issue	76
Page	71
Copyright Date	2023
Article Type	Accident reports