



AAC Publications

FALL ON ROCK — Loose Rock

Utah, Moab, Kane Springs Canyon

On April 12, Dalton Snow (29) was leading an unnamed single-pitch route (5.11) in order to rig a highline when he dislodged a loose rock and fell 40 or 50 feet onto a low-angle slab near the base of the route.

The first half of the route had poor rock, but the second section (which Snow almost reached) ascended a clean crack. Snow clipped the route's single protection bolt about 10 feet off the ground. Ten feet farther, he placed a solid cam. Above, as he was manteling, a refrigerator-sized block broke loose from the wall and Snow fell with it. The cam held, but with the runout, Snow hit the slab at the base. The impact broke his pelvis, five ribs, collarbone, and scapula. Worse, part of his right arm was almost completely torn off during the fall.

Fortunately, Snow's two partners that day were James Xu and Lorenzo DeMuro. Both were Wilderness First Responders. Xu, the belayer, made a tourniquet with a cordelette, just below Snow's elbow. Xu then scrambled up the slab behind them to call for rescue with his Garmin inReach. DeMuro stayed behind to monitor vital signs and keep Snow in high spirits. The nearly severed arm was placed into a beanie and wrapped in a windbreaker. "We just tried to keep it as dry and sterile as we could," DeMuro said. "It was beyond a splint." By 6:45 p.m., rescuers arrived, but it took several hours to haul Snow to a waiting helicopter. It was reported that he would keep his reattached hand after surgeries, but with limited function.

ANALYSIS

Loose rock is always a hazard, especially in soft-rock areas like the Utah desert. The climber was unfortunate to suffer a severe injury, but it could have been worse. Though he was not wearing a helmet, Snow avoided a head injury, despite the falling block exploding on the slab where he landed.

DeMuro said the accident was a perfect example of the importance of emergency preparedness and medical training. "Our training kicked in, it was all muscle memory, and we were able to help," he said. "Medical training is the lightest form of gear."

"Taking a Wilderness First Responder course, buying a satellite device—that'll put you back \$1,000, but it's worth it," added Kiley Hartigan, a close friend of Snow. "[He] would've died, he would've bled out [without the medical treatment Xu and DeMuro were able to provide]." (Sources: Climbing.com and the Moab Sun News.)

Images

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