



AAC Publications

Fall on Rock — Protection Pulled Out

New Hampshire, North Conway, Cathedral Ledge, Barber Wall

On Sunday, May 28, at 6:30 p.m., Matt Allen (24) was leading Retaliation (3 pitches, 5.9) on the Barber Wall. He took a fall while leading pitch two, pulling out a cam and two lower pieces of gear. His resulting fall was 50 feet and near fall factor two. Allen hit the cliff and suffered serious but non-life-threatening injuries. He was not wearing a helmet.

His partner was able to call 911. New Hampshire Fish and Game Department personnel responded, supported by Mountain Rescue Service, Bartlett Police, and the Bartlett and North Conway fire departments. First responders used the paved state park road to reach the summit area, then some of the responders hiked down to a treed ledge to reach the base of the climb. Allen was alert and conscious, with back pain but with feeling in his limbs. He was stabilized, placed in a litter, and hoisted to the cliff top. He reached the ambulance at the summit parking area by 10 p.m. and was transported to Memorial Hospital in North Conway for treatment.

ANALYSIS

Retaliation's second pitch is a 100-plus-foot-long, continuous, right-leaning crack. While there is good gear all the way, it can be tough to see the placements, since the crack is at your knees much of the time. There have been a few injuries on this climb due to climbers getting pumped, stuffing in less than optimal gear, and then falling from the burly crux layback where the crack steepens.

Allen was aware his cam was marginal but went for it anyway. Lateness in the day and relatively hot weather may have somewhat fatigued him. When possible, take the time and make the effort to find stances where you can ensure your protection placements are solid. In a few spots, you can step down and right of the Retaliation crack to get a good view of your placements and preview the climbing ahead. Solid cam placements generally have lobes at least 50 percent retracted, with the stem aligned with the fall line and a sling long enough to prevent rotation by the rope as you climb past. (Sources: Sgt. Alex Lopashanski of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department and Dave Custer.)

Images

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