



AAC Publications

Fatal Solo Fall

Washington, Snoqualmie Pass Area, The Tooth

The Tooth is one of the most popular summits in the Cascades and was the scene of a fatal solo fall in August 2023. The climber was probably traversing northwest toward the Fang (sunlit spire on the right) when she fell. Photo: Climbing partner of the decedent

On August 16, a 35-year-old female climber attempted a solo climb of the Tooth near Snoqualmie Pass. She shared an inReach tracking link with two close friends upon leaving the trailhead.

The climber successfully climbed the South Face Route (330 feet, 5.4) and texted photos from the summit around 6:30 p.m. After leaving the summit, she traveled north and somehow fell from the ridge between the Tooth and the Fang (an adjacent summit due north). She fell 600 feet to the toe of the Northeast Slabs route. The climber was wearing approach shoes and a helmet, and had worn rock shoes during the ascent.

One of the people with the inReach tracking information called SAR late that evening after the climber failed to return home and did not respond to phone or inReach messaging. It was also clear from the inReach track that she would have had enough time to return to the trailhead but had not.

A SAR team hiked in the next morning and located the climber's body by 7:40 a.m. using GPS points and drone support. The climber had succumbed to injuries from the long fall. The SAR team extracted the body using a helicopter.

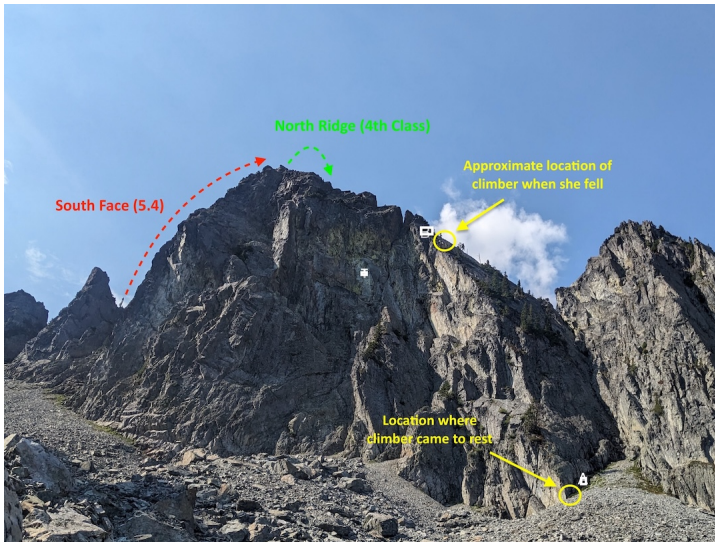
ANALYSIS

Unroped scrambling is inherently risky. The Tooth is a volcanic rock formation, and rock quality varies significantly.

The North Ridge (4th class) is the preferred descent for unroped climbers, but judging from where she came to rest, it was not possible for her to have fallen from that route. Those close to the climber knew she loved traversing ridgelines and was looking for an after-work loop, close to Seattle. An inReach GPS point was sent at 6:55 p.m. from atop the ridge. The next, at 8:05 p.m., was at the bottom of the NE slabs. Sunset on August 16 was 8:18 p.m. Thus, it is likely that, given the daylight remaining, she left the North Ridge descent and crossed onto the ridge between the Tooth and the Fang, with the intent of traversing farther, before descending easy terrain to the west.

The exact cause of her fall is unknown, but loose rock is most likely. When traversing exposed terrain, there is little room for error and caution must be taken to avoid brittle rock and fragile holds. The climber had traversed similar terrain many times and was someone who navigated chossy rock with ease. Her accident was a shock and a reminder that casual mountain outings can be as deadly as more foreboding objectives. (Sources: A close climbing partner of the decedent, Seattle Mountain Rescue, and Portland Mountain Rescue.)

Images



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Article Details

Author	Close Climbing Partner of the decendent, Seattle and Portland Mtn. Rescue
Publication	ANAM
Volume	13
Issue	77
Page	
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Accident reports