



AAC Publications

Leader Fall on Rock — Protection Pulled Out

Nevada, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, Oak Creek Canyon

On November 10, I, Eric Chaudhary, and a partner (male, 26) were climbing Marijuana (5 pitches, 11c) in the Black Orpheus Amphitheater. My partner was leading the second pitch (10b). It exits hard left off a hanging belay with one bolt for protection about six feet above and ten feet to the left of the belay. The route then cuts back right to a roof/bulge, where I believe he placed a Black Diamond number 0.3 Z4 cam.

He did the move, manteled up, and was getting his stance when his foot slipped and he fell. The piece in the roof ripped, causing him to fall about six feet before being caught by the rope clipped to the first bolt. His ankle snagged and flipped him aggressively. The first thing that struck the wall was his head. He was wearing a helmet.

He was unconscious and hanging upside down approximately ten feet to my left and four feet above me. I lowered him to a small ledge that flipped him upright. He was now level with me. I then tied off the rope with a Munter-mule hitch and took him off belay. I called 911 (spotty reception) and relayed our location. I then yelled to a party of hikers or climbers at the base of the canyon. I informed them we needed helicopter rescue and that I was not sure if EMS had received my location.

I then basically lassoed my partner with a coil of rope and pulled him to me at the belay. Around then he started regaining consciousness. I secured him to the anchor, untied him, and set up a rappel. We then did a tandem rappel to the base of the first pitch with him attached to me. Luckily, we had twin 60-meter ropes.

At the actual base of the climb there is one belay bolt, but unfortunately it was too high to utilize as an anchor for the low-5th-class slab below. I built a two-piece gear anchor to descend that 150-foot lower section that comprises the approach to the first pitch. As we were rappelling, a SAR member yelled from the base of the canyon. I told him my partner was in and out of consciousness and we needed helicopter rescue. I finished the rap to a large ledge system. Five minutes later, a helicopter arrived. They flew out my partner and then returned for the SAR team member and me. My injured partner was diagnosed with a brain injury and ended up spending two weeks in the ICU.

ANALYSIS

I inspected the cam that blew, and it had a gouge in two of the lobes. The next party to climb the route retrieved our bail anchor. I was told that the spot where the piece had blown had no fresh scar. I'm still not sure why it didn't hold and hope to climb the route again to inspect it. (Source: Eric Chaudhary.)

**Editor's Note:* Fortunately, Chaudhary was very competent and effected an efficient self-rescue. Had he not descended to a helicopter-accessible area, the rescue might have taken many hours longer, and on a day when sunset was 4:30 p.m. Although close to Las Vegas, many parts of Red Rock are remote and have little or no cell phone service. Climbers should consider carrying an emergency satellite communication device.

Images

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