



## AAC Publications

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### Lead Fall — Swung into Wall Behind Belayer

Colorado, Clear Creek Canyon, New Hipster Rock

This photo shows the close proximity of an adjacent rock to the overhanging arête of The Hipster (5.12a). On May 2, a climber fell while clipping the fourth bolt (middle of red circle). He hit the slab behind him (red X). Photo: Geoff Salter

**On May 2, I was leading The Hipster (5.12a), an overhanging sport route on the New Hipster WRock in Clear Creek Canyon.** I fell while attempting to clip the fourth bolt; the rope caught me after a fall of roughly 15 feet, and then I hit the rising slab behind me. Slack in the system combined with swing off the overhanging route caused a direct impact on my sacral and buttock area. My belayer (39, 12 years of experience) was pulled slightly upward during the catch. I had immediate pain but no neurological signs or weakness, and was able to walk out without assistance. No hospital evaluation was obtained. Both of us are physician assistants, and an ER nurse was also with the party.

### ANALYSIS

I misjudged the risk of impacting terrain that is not part of the route itself. The combination of an overhanging line with a slab immediately behind it leaves little room for a clean lead fall. I often push through difficult clips, a tactic that did not serve me well here. A week later, I went back and sent the route using alpine draw extensions on the key bolts, which reduced the potential fall distance above the looming slab. Longer draws or other extension methods are worth considering on any route where the fall line is complicated by terrain. Minor accidents deserve attention because they can still teach us something, and this one taught me to look harder at what's behind/below me before committing to a clip. (Source: Geoff Salter.)

## Images



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