



AAC Publications

Ledge Fall

Colorado, Eldorado Canyon State Park, The Bastille

On August 8, Person 1 (35) and Person 2 (34) met for a quick morning of climbing in Eldorado Canyon. Short on time, they settled on a link-up of the first pitch of March of Dimes (5.9), the second pitch of Werk Supp (5.9), and then the third pitch of March of Dimes (5.10c), all on the north face of the Bastille. Both had done this combination in the past. Person 2 led the first short pitch to a bolted anchor. Person 1 followed, and then led 30 to 40 feet of unprotected low-fifth-class terrain to reach the ledge below pitch two of Werk Supp.

Continuing leading above the ledge, Person 1 placed a piece at the base of Werk Supp's notorious crux, a wide, right-angling crack. He placed a second piece four to five feet higher, and then clipped a fixed cam another foot or two above that. Inside a pod higher on the pitch, Person 1 placed a No. 3 cam. Climbing out of the pod, he attempted to place a No. 2 cam, but it was blind and did not seat. He re-racked the cam and continued, climbing through the crux, feeling pumped but still comfortable; he then placed a No. 1 cam when the No. 3 was a foot or two below his feet and clipped an extended alpine draw to it. Just as Person 1 was pulling up rope to clip, he fell—the likeliest cause was a foot slip, though Person 1 does not recall.

Person 1 fell about 25 feet and landed on the ledge below, striking his right leg, left hand, and left buttock. The No. 3 cam held. Initially, he felt unscathed, but swelling in his right ankle was later diagnosed as caused by a ligament rupture. Person 2 lowered him to the ground on their 70m rope, and Person 1's spouse took him to the hospital.

ANALYSIS

Two contributing factors stand out: First, the 30 to 40 feet of unprotected low-fifth-class terrain leading to the crack on Werk Supp added slack/rope stretch into the fall—setting up a belay on the ledge right below the crack would have reduced stretch and ledge-fall potential. Second, skipping the No. 2 cam placement left Person 1 more runout than he needed to be. Person 1 knew it was there. Taking the time to find it might have prevented his impact with the ledge. (Source: Anonymous.)

Images

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