



## AAC Publications

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### **Fall on Rock – Inadequate Protection**

Canada, British Columbia, Squamish, The Apron

**For the first route of our first day of climbing in Squamish**, my climbing partner and I started up Calculus Direct, a 5.9 variation start to Calculus Crack on the Apron. I led the first pitch (5.9) with ease, built an anchor, and brought up my second. Starting the second pitch (5.8), I traversed a few feet along a sloping ledge, placed a cam, and then started up a beautiful vertical hand crack. After climbing above the initial piece of protection, I decided to make one more move before placing another piece. I made an awkward attempt to toe jam into an adjacent crack and released my solid hand jam for what I thought would be a good hold higher up. However, the hold was not there, and I ended up losing my balance and falling from the crack onto the ledge below. I broke my right ankle, fracturing bones in four places, and continued falling until the cam caught the fall.

Upon realizing that my ankle was unusable, we initiated a self-rescue. My partner, Charles Cooper, secured me to the anchor and removed me from the belay. He attached his Grigri to the master point and lowered me without incident, then rapped down. I was able to reach the nearby road with assistance from some awesome climbers on the trail. I was taken to the emergency room in Squamish, where they attempted unsuccessfully to reduce the dislocation, and eventually we drove to Vancouver, where I received ankle surgery.

### **Analysis**

This injury was entirely avoidable. I was ascending a great set of hand cracks, which provided ample opportunities for protection. I had become comfortable with runouts over moderate terrain and did not feel the 5.8 grade was anything to worry about. I consciously chose not to place an additional piece of protection, even though a fall inevitably would result in striking the ledge. This was partly out of a desire to save gear for the remainder of the pitch, but also was borne out of my belief that I would not fall from a 5.8 hand crack.

I've been climbing for five years and trad climbing for about three years, and I broke several of my personal climbing rules that morning. Most prominently I failed to respect the fact that a fall can happen even when you think a climb is well within your ability. I should have recognized the ledge created a dangerous fall zone and placed more gear. Finally, I should have planned my moves more deliberately. Instead, I put myself off balance and made a somewhat dynamic move to a hold that I mistakenly assumed was a jug. (Source: Tyler Lobdell.)

## Images



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