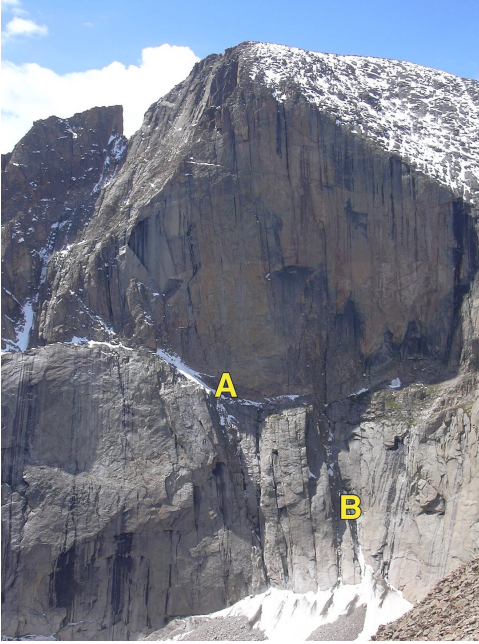# Fatal Fall During Approach — Climbing Unroped

Colorado, Rocky Mountain National Park, Longs Peak

On July 30, Dillon Blanksma, 26, fell from Broadway ledge during the approach to the Diamond wall. The fall was fatal. Blanksma and his climbing partner had done the standard North Chimney approach and were on their way to a route on the left side of the Diamond. Broadway is normally traversed by walking unroped, but toward its left side the ledge system narrows and slopes more steeply toward the 600- to 800-foot-high Lower East Face. To reach the start of climbs on this side, a band of fourth-class rock approximately 30 feet high must be climbed. Blanksma, still unroped, is believed to have fallen from on or near this section, possibly as a result of a loose hold. Dillon was a staff member at the American Alpine Club's Golden, Colorado, headquarters and is much missed by his colleagues, friends, and family.

ANALYSIS

At least four climbers have died in falls from Broadway. Three of them—including one in 2000 and another in 2010—were doing similar unroped approaches up fourth-class rock to reach their intended climbs. Although the granite on the Diamond face is generally very solid, Broadway and the short fourth-class band above the ledge are comprised of weathered alpine rock, with many potentially loose holds. Climbers are understandably in a hurry to reach their objectives on a busy wall that is prone to afternoon thunderstorms, but the history of accidents in this area suggests that roping up and belaying the final fourth-class approach would save lives. (Source: The Editors.)

Images

The Diamond on Longs Peak. (A) Approximate location of fatal fall from Broadway ledge in the incident described here. (B) Approximate location of fall from the North Chimney approach to the face, described in another ANAC 2021 report. The ledges had less snow at the time of these accidents.

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