Rescue Profile: Ben and Dave

Case #: 7438



Sonora SAR on the scene

Several friends headed out for a quick lap of kayaking in California's Cherry Bomb gorge. Gear packed and ready for the water, Ben, who had bought a SPOT Satellite GPS Messenger™ a few days before, tossed the device in his backpack as an afterthought. "The camp was only 10 minutes away and it was just a quick trip," recalled Ben. "I didn't think we would need SPOT, but I figured I've got it, I might as well take it."

Ben, sidelined from a previous injury, watched from a ledge as his friends passed by.

Dave, one of the fittest and strongest members of the group, was stuck in a pothole and wasn't coming out. After what seemed like eternity, his capsized boat washed slowly around the corner and over the weir. Another paddler somehow managed to get to Dave and paddle out of the hole. Once out of the water, Dave began to receive CPR.

"This couldn't be happening," recalls Ben. "I was watching one of my best mates die and I was helpless. What about his two kids?" Ben knew that Dave needed a defibrillator, which they didn't have. Consequently, Ben pressed his SPOT's S.O.S. button, alerting the GEOS International Rescue Coordination Center.

Dave eventually regained consciousness. But the friends weren't in the clear just yet. Dave was still stuck in the heart of the gorge without any gear and possibly with broken ribs.

Two hours after the accident occurred, Sonora SAR arrived on scene via helicopter. Twenty minutes later, the rescue team had Dave back down at a landing site, where an eagerly awaited reunion with his buddies took place.

A year later, Ben still gets emotional when thinking about how he almost lost his friend. He looks back on the event as a learning opportunity. Some lessons learned, he likes to share:

- Match your fitness (not just skills) to the environment.

  Having a solid team with the skills to match can make all the difference.

  Get a SPOT and buy the additional GEOS Search and Rescue upgrade. You're a fool not to.