

Hardscrabble Peak, Northern Bridgers

Date

Thu, 11/12/2020 - 16:30

Activity

Skiing

Hi guys I'm back from the desert and decided to go out to see about some skiing and to see what the snow is doing on my birthday. My partner and I had the objective of skiing the White Worm under Hardscrabble since it's pretty low angle but on the approach there is a rollover and while I was skinning up to the rollover I popped off a wind slab approximately 50 X 50' with a 6" crown. The slab itself was only about 4" thick and only slid about 5" down the slope before stopping, and I was able to stop and then turn around and ski off of the slab without it moving any further. The 4" of dry slab was sitting on about 3" of sugary snow that was on a very firm icy bed surface. I did not have any shooting cracks coming from under my skis or whoomphing prior to the break. I knew I had gotten into some slabby snow and the break happened fast, probably only 2 strides past where it was just powder on top of the bed surface. It just goes to show how quickly things can change and turn into a problem. Fortunately the slab didn't keep sliding and take me for a ride, but based on how quickly the snow went from behaving like snow that is safe to travel on to touchy and irritable, we made the decision to turn around as we would have had to travel through more of the same to get both into and off of the White Worm. I'm glad we did because the wind had been blowing all day and even where we had just come up an hour earlier the snow had started to slab up and I kicked off a couple more much smaller slabs that slid about 5' down the slope before stopping while we were survival skiing down our bootpack, in snow that was benign on the way up. It changed that fast.

I am asking myself what I would do differently if I found myself in a similar situation in the future, and the answer is I don't know. I could have taken a different route up through some trees and rock bands, but I didn't get any negative feedback from the snow until I was in it and it broke, so really I don't know. Back out off of the wind slab as soon as I noticed it taking on a different feel is also a possibility. I will say that I am glad we made the prudent decision to travel one by one across a slope we had just discussed as being potentially dangerous; it broke well away from where my partner was observing me cross the slope. And to turn around. If you guys have any helpful feedback, I'm all ears, I realize it's difficult to say since you weren't there but I take this as a lucky experience to examine what I could do better and to be thankful that it turned out to be a pretty mellow oh shit moment.

Cheers and hope you are all doing well!

Region

Bridger Range

Observer Name

Jeanine Dalimata