Elephant N. Face Slide

Date
Sat, 03/04/2023 - 12:30
Activity
Skiing

Traveling into Blackmore Basin we assessed two potential lines from below that we had already planned to potentially ski. We gained the saddle between Blackmore and Elephant. We observed snow transport from SW winds and noted the zone we were heading to might have wind loading occurring at the top. We traversed on scoured slopes by foot over to the entrance of the line that we intended to ski. Upon our arrival we noted a convexity of wind loaded snow on the skiers left of the start zone and made note to avoid it. We transitioned to skis and made a plan for skier 1 to enter traversing to the skiers right. Once skier 1 started traversing to the right, approximately 40 feet from skier 2, a small collapse propagated at the ski tips of skier 1 across the entire entrance. Skier 1 yelled avalanche and was able to self arrest on the bed surface/ crown. After the slide occurred, we reassessed and felt comfortable descending on the bed surface to the toe of the debris, one at a time. We decided that was enough for one day and headed back to the trailhead. In retrospect, we underestimated the size of the potential wind slab and the danger of the high consequences terrain where a slide might not bury but potentially carry and kill a skier by taking them over cliffs.

SS-ASu-R2-D1.5-I

Vertical Fall: ~700'

Distance Traveled: ~1000'

Aspect: 15 N

Elevation of start zone: 9645'

Region
Northern Gallatin
Location (from list)
Elephant Mountain
Observer Name
Griffin D. & Ray B.