

Dog Leads Rescuers to Injured Triathlete

Pet led rescuers across five miles in the Colorado cold.

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A well-known Colorado adventure athlete can thank her dog for leading rescuers to her after she fell while running, was severely injured, and spent two nights in subfreezing temperatures.

On Dec. 13, two-time adventure racing world champion and triathlete Danelle Balengee was out running with her dog Taz, a 3-year-old German Shepherd Dog-Golden Retriever mix, when she slipped on a patch of ice and tumbled off three straight rock faces of 10 to 20 feet each.

After the fall, Balengee crawled about a quarter-mile on her hands and knees to try to find help. When that didn't work, Taz went to find help.

Meanwhile, a neighbor called Balengee's parents after she hadn't seen any sign of Balengee for over a day.

Coinciding with the arrival of search-and-rescue personnel, a dog matching Taz's description was seen running around the trailhead. Once found, Taz eventually led rescuers on a five-mile journey to the accident site.

"We were going to try to identify the dog, but the dog basically didn't want to be caught and instead turned around and headed back toward the trail," Grand County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Curt Brewer said.

"When that happened, the search crew decided to follow the dog. And the dog took our rescue personnel right to her," Brewer explained.

A helicopter airlifted Balengee to a hospital, and she had surgery Dec. 19 to repair a broken pelvis. She's also recovering from severe frostbite on her feet, internal bleeding, and numerous cuts and bruises. Doctors have said it's unlikely the frostbite will cause her to lose any toes.