

Caleb Martin leads NC State past South Alabama, 88-70

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) - Anthony "Cat" Barber helped North Carolina State rebound from a surprising loss by, well, rebounding.

And scoring. And passing.

The Wolfpack's point guard had 17 points and a career-high 12 rebounds in an 88-70 victory over South Alabama on Sunday night.

Barber finished two assists shy of becoming the first N.C. State player with a triple-double since Julius Hodge in 2002. "Our emphasis tonight was, 'Everybody get involved in rebounding,'" coach Mark Gottfried said of Barber's work on the boards. "He was a floor general, got us in our offense, controlled the tempo."

Caleb Martin scored 19 points, and freshman Maverick Rowan added 15 points for the Wolfpack (1-1).

They bounced back from a surprisingly one-sided loss to William & Mary two nights earlier in the opener by shooting 51 percent — nearly 59 percent after halftime. They never trailed but couldn't pull away until early in the second half.

"We just came out and we wanted to win the game," Barber said. "The last game, we wanted to win that, but we weren't in that mood of taking the game. This game, we came out and our mood was to take the game and we were going to win it."

Taishaun Johnson had 18 points for the Jaguars (1-1), who shot just 31.5 percent.

Abdul-Malik Abu added 14 points for N.C. State, which broke this one open by scoring on seven straight trips downcourt in the second half. Martin — who scored a career-best 21 points against the Tribe — played a central role in that spurt.

He sandwiched a pair of 3-pointers around a stickback of Abu's missed jumper. BeeJay Anya's putback dunk two possessions later made it 60-44 with 11 minutes to play.

That put the Wolfpack well on their way to the win and helped them avoid their first 0-2 start since the 1993-94 team opened with consecutive losses to Weber State and Wisconsin-Green Bay at the Great Alaska Shootout.

"I thought we were obviously a little bit better than we were a couple of nights ago," Gottfried said. "We've just got such a long way to go. Tonight we took a step forward, which was nice. Defensively, we've got to learn a lot, and offensively, learn how to run an offense and learn how to find each other."

They also wanted to prove they could win without shooting guard Terry Henderson, the latest in a series of high-scoring guards who transferred to N.C. State in recent years. He will miss at least six weeks after suffering an ankle injury against William & Mary.

The Wolfpack trailed by 23 in that 85-68 defeat, and for a while, there was a lingering sense that they were in for a fight against a team picked to finish seventh in the Sun Belt.

This was a four-point game in the final minute of the first half — when Don MuepoKelly's putback dunk with about 30 seconds left made it 38-34. N.C. State didn't take its first double-figure lead until Barber's free throw with 18:37 to play pushed it to 44-34.