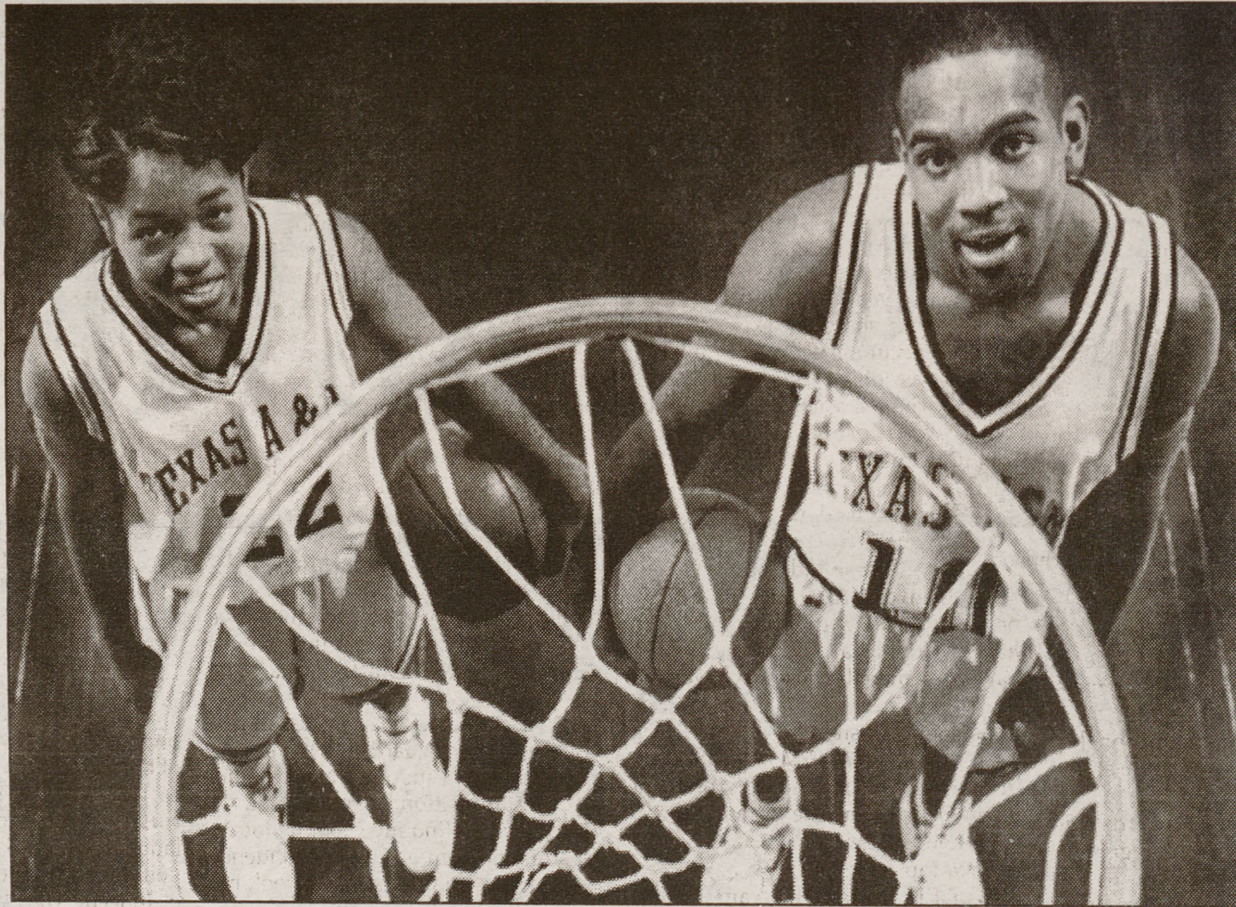


# At the point of attack...



Kyle Burnett/The Battalion

Lady Aggie sophomore point guard **Lisa Branch** (left) and A&M men's senior point guard **David Edwards** are both hoping to have a season filled with smiles. Branch captured 1993 Southwest Conference Newcomer of the Year honors as she averaged 13 points per game while Edwards, who was second team All-SWC, also averaged 13 points per game.

## As guards Branch and Edwards go, so will A&M

By Michael Plumer

THE BATTALION

Whether it be YMCA basketball or the National Basketball Association, the most important position on the court has become the point guard.

Ten years ago, a dominating center was considered vital for a team to have any kind of success. Now, a slick, cross-over dribble and a behind-the-back pass draw more cheers from the crowd than a mere thundering dunk.

Basketball's point guards cause havoc on the defensive side, they get their teammates involved on the offensive end, and plain and simple, a good point guard wins championships. Just ask Magic Johnson and Bobby Hurley.

This season at G. Rollie White Coliseum, that caliber of guard will be distributing the ball for the Texas A&M men's and women's teams: senior David Edwards and sophomore Lisa Branch.

A&M men's head coach Tony Barone said Edwards is a necessity for the Aggie offense to run.

"The big issue with Dave is that he is quicker with the ball this year," Barone said. "He does not just run up and down the court with the ball. Great guards have the ball as the extension of themselves.

"He has that skill."

Branch's main component is hitting the outside shot, but she showed her passing abilities when set a

Southwest Conference record for assists with 19 against Texas Christian. Because of her abilities, she was named SWC Newcomer of the Year last season.

That fact could cause possibly cause Branch to be a marked player.

"I think we have enough qualified players to step up and take the pressure off of me," Branch said.

"Somebody will score points if our opponents concentrate on me."

Invariably, a rivalry has developed inside the A&M basketball programs. It is not something that could rip the teams apart but to the two combatants, it is intense.

Edwards versus Branch.

"I beat her every time we play," Edwards said with a smile. "I do not give her any slack. Seriously, I like her game and her style of play. She plays hard.

"We tease each other about our biggest (rival) opponents, but it is good-natured. She is one of my best friends."

Branch said Edwards' supposed domination comes because the 5'9" Edwards can afford to get out of his game and play tall against the 5'4" Branch.

"The biggest problem I have playing him is he just posts me up," Branch said. "I do not have a chance when he does that. His hands are real quick along with his feet.

But Branch said she would also like to pick up one thing from Edwards away from the pick-up

games.

"I hope to learn something from him, like how to get my teammates motivated and keep everybody up."

Style-wise, Branch and Edwards are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. Branch is more of a pure shooter who can create opportunities for her teammates because opponents have to respect her outside shot.

"I like to set up the offense and get everybody the ball," Branch said. "This season I feel relaxed because I know what it is like."

Edwards is a fancy ball-handler who keeps opponents on the edge because of his dribbling skills.

When teams back off of him and expect him to pass, he can also drop the outside shot.

"For me, the game is more instinctive, and I just let it flow," Edwards said. "Some-

times, I try to do too much, and I try to carry the team, but my job is to get the ball, figure out what gets a guy motivated, and make sure I do that so he can score and have success."

Barone said that Edwards can be guilty of carrying too large of a burden.

"At times last year, he tried to do too much," Barone said. "But this is not necessarily bad. Dave does try to take on too many people at a time which can throw us out of whack.

"He has such a desire to play well, though, and we could not compete without him."



Edwards



Branch