

Branch leads the break to A&M's success

□ Point guard is the 'total package player.'

By Tom Day
THE BATTALION

When junior Lisa Branch stormed onto the Texas A&M basketball scene two seasons ago, few people expected her to make a really big splash, not even Lisa Branch. But the 5-foot 4-inch point guard surprised many people that year, including herself.

"I was scared to death coming in here as a freshman," Branch said. "I thought I'd just be a role player."

Branch turned out to be a lot more. With a keen ability for distributing the ball, playing pressure defense and providing instant offense, Branch possesses all the weapons needed to lead the Aggies.



Branch

"She's the total package player and she has given us a great effort on both ends of the floor," first-year head coach Candi Harvey said. "She's probably the best at that position that I've ever had the opportunity to coach and I'm real thankful that I have two years with her."

In less than two-and-a-half seasons, Branch has already begun rewriting the A&M record books. The point guard already owns seven Lady Aggie records and is just one of four players in A&M history to reach the 500-point plateau in a season. With 461 career assists, Branch is closing in on the team record of 481 held by Donna Roper.

Although she was apprehensive at first, Branch has accepted her role as the team's leader.

"I had never really been a leader until I got here," Branch said. "I was

put in that role, and I've learned to live with it.

"We have a close team. I give my teammates feedback and they give me feedback and that makes it easy for me to be a leader. They respect me so much, and I respect them for that."

Last season, Branch was named Southwest Conference Co-Player of the Year by the league and SWC Player of the Year by several newspapers. Named to the 1994 District VI GTE Academic All-America first team, Branch is active in several student organizations and she has volunteered for numerous charitable events.

Branch credits her success on and off the court to her parents' support.

"I do everything to please my parents," Branch said. "They have supported me through everything and I attribute my success to them."

As the team's premiere player, Branch feels more pressure meeting personal expectations rather than those of fans or the media.

"Sometimes, I blame myself for the losses and it takes my teammates to tell me I put too much pressure on myself," Branch said. "I put more pressure on myself than anybody could ever put on me."

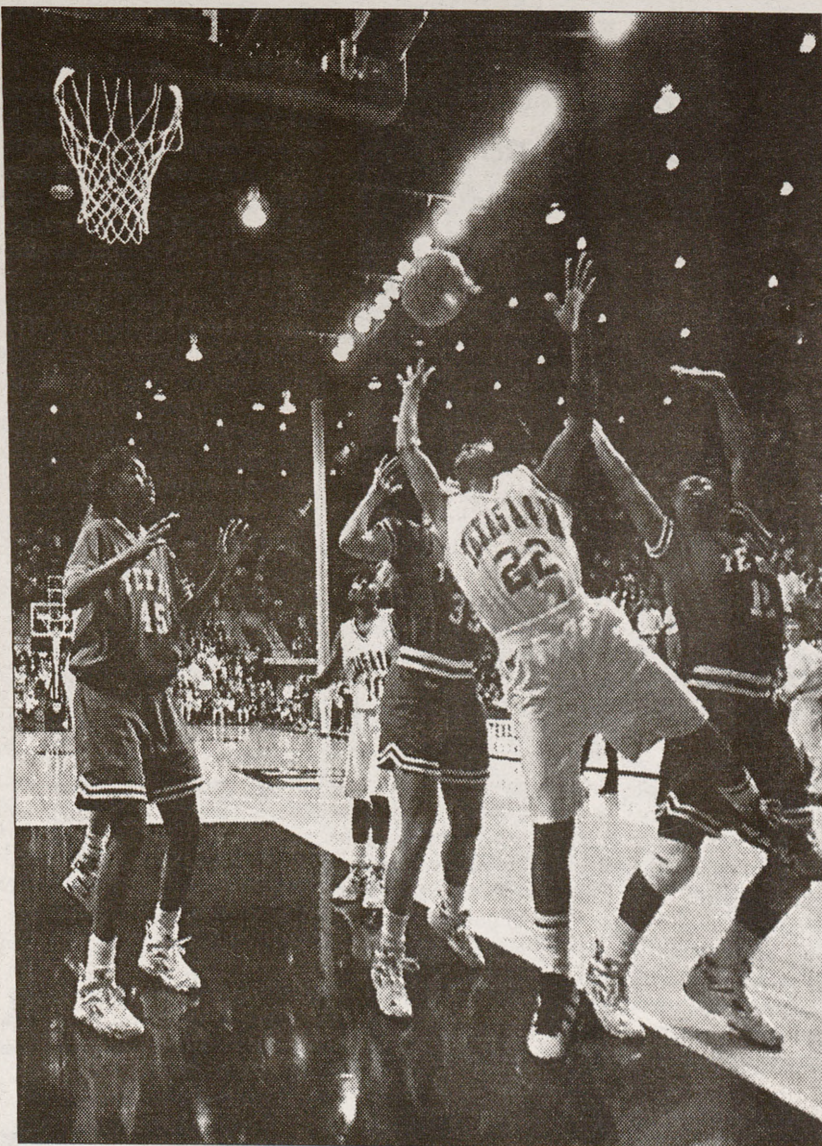
Branch feels the Lady Aggies are capable of duplicating last season's success if the team can learn from losses rather than worrying about them.

"We need to stop worrying about things like missed shots and losses," Branch said. "That's the difference between a number one team in the nation and the No. 25 ranked team. They learn from their losses and go on."

Harvey said Branch is capable of leading the Lady Aggies to the top.

"I've asked her to do some different things this year and she's met me more than halfway on them," Harvey said. "I think she's ready to lead this team to a SWC championship."

Branch said the records and accolades she takes in are secondary to



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION

Lisa Branch #22 reaches for a long rebound over two Lady Longhorns during a game Saturday Jan. 14 in G. Rolie White Coliseum.

her steady improvement and the team's success.

"I just want to get better each year," Branch said. "It's not anything

about being an All-American or MVP of the conference. I just want to get better and see how far along we can go as a team."

REWRITING THE RECORD BOOKS

□ Lisa Branch is moving up the career ladder in career assists, free throws made, free throws attempted, points and steals.

Assists

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Donna Roper (1985-89) | 481 |
| 2. Lisa Branch (1992-Present) | 447 |

Free Throws Made

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Lisa Langston (1982-86) | 361 |
| 2. Lisa Branch (1992-Present) | 330 |

Free Throws Attempted

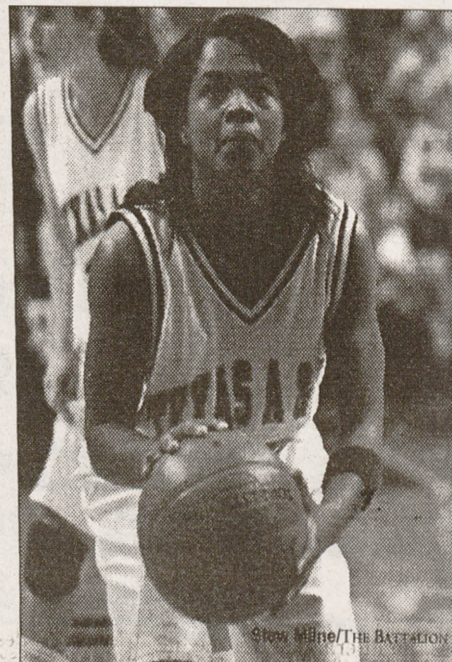
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Lisa Langston (1982-86) | 521 |
| 2. Lisa Jordon (1985-89) | 440 |
| 3. Donna Roper (1985-89) | 420 |
| 4. Lisa Branch (1992-Present) | 412 |

Points

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Lisa Langston (1982-86) | 1,615 |
| 2. Donna Roper (1985-89) | 1,513 |
| 3. Michell Tatum (1981-85) | 1,163 |
| 4. Jenni Edgar (1981-85) | 1,149 |
| 5. Lisa Jordon (1985-89) | 1,104 |
| 6. Lisa Branch (1992-Present) | 1,042 |

Steals

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Lisa Langston (1982-86) | 236 |
| 2. Donna Roper (1985-89) | 235 |
| 3. Von Bunn (1976-79) | 219 |
| 4. Jenni Edgar (1981-1985) | 187 |
| 5. Kelley Sullivan (1978-82) | 180 |
| 6. Lisa Branch (1992-Present) | 173 |



Stew Milne/THE BATTALION