

Dread in the air as a local high school approaches a state record

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An Alhambra high school football team is approaching a state record that could make them really stand out.

But football players at Mark Keppel high school aren't exactly thrilled.

That's because the state record is for the most consecutive losses.

The Mark Keppel Aztecs lost to the Montebello Oilers last Friday at Aztec Stadium, 34-6 -- making it their 43rd straight loss.



With 46 straight losses from 1977 to 1982, Moorpark holds the current record for the longest losing streak -- not including wins by forfeit or default. Including wins by forfeit and defaults, the Ganesha Giants of Pomona holds the record: 49 consecutive losses from 2003 to 2008, [according CalHiSports.com](http://CalHiSports.com) (Ganesha had a two wins by forfeit and default in the middle of their losing streak).

Interviews with several players seemed to confirm that the Aztecs could be some of the most "lovable losers" around: They spoke with optimism, pride and passion -- focusing on the next game as an opportunity to turn things around.

"I don't think about our losing streak. I'm always thinking about working harder on the next play," said tight-end Hugo Montes.

Still, alumni who remember the wins can't help but miss those days.

"It's really sad that we have engaged in this losing streak," said Aaron Lugo, a current Cal State LA student and an alumnus of Mark Keppel, who played for the school's football team from 2012 to 2015. "My alumni morale kind of dies with it but I'm still proud to have once been an Aztec."

The last time the Aztecs won a game was back in 2014, when they defeated the Workman Lobos, 50-26, on the road.

There were close games in the middle of the Aztecs' losing streak that could have gone their way. Lugo recalled his Senior Night three years ago -- when the San Gabriel Matadors came

back and defeated the Aztecs 33-22. "I was mad because I knew I could have done better. My friend Andrew was crying because he wanted this win so badly," he said.

With the recent loss against the Oilers, the Aztecs are now 0-8 overall this season, and 0-4 in the Almont League standings, while the Oilers improved their record to 3-1 in the Almont League and 4-5 overall.

"[Our] defense tried to keep us in the game, but Montebello's a pretty good football team and they played better than we did," said Aztecs' head coach John Tuttle.

"I think that [it] was a good game overall. Even though we lost, we definitely had opportunities to score and we didn't capitalize on them," said Aztecs quarterback George Steve Shahi.

Despite their losing streak, some current Aztecs football players said they refuse to let this be a distraction when it comes to the team's performance on the field.

"[The losing streak] doesn't affect our future approach," said Aztecs running back Jason Chi Tang. We always look forward to playing other opponents. Even though they're really good, we still treat them as regular opponents."

The Aztecs had a reason to celebrate anyway: They honored their seniors on Senior Night prior to the game. Friends and families gathered to honor not only their football seniors, but the seniors from cheer, drill and band in the pre-game festivities.

Tuttle thanked his seniors for their contributions to the team and said he hopes to send them off the right way -- with a win in their final game.

The next game for the Aztecs will be against their cross-town rivals, the Alhambra Moors, on Friday at Aztec Stadium. The game will also be the Homecoming game for the Aztecs as they play their final game of the season.

"I don't know how the game's going to go, [but] we're going to do a better job and get that win," said Montes.

For seniors such as Tang and Shahi, this will be the last time they put on the uniform for the Aztecs.

Tang, for his part, said, "I'm ready to go out with a bang."

Shahi added, "Like every game, I'm going to give everything I have and it put out there on the line. Hopefully, everyone else on the team does the same and we come out with a win."

The team has its sights set on halting the losing streak -- and *not* breaking the record.