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Central Texas high school athletes who have chosen to wear No. 13 despite its bad-luck reputation include (from left) Jamal Lee of Pflugerville, A.C. Padilla of Bastrop, Chet Moss of Cedar Park and Andy Erickson of Lake Travis.

**By Rick Cantu**

AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Cedar Park linebacker Chet Moss thinks black cats are cute and would not be afraid to tug on Superman's cape if given the chance.

So when the subject of his wearing jersey No. 13 for his high school football team came up, he offered a shrug-of-the-shoulders response: "It doesn't faze me like it bothers some others."

Moss does not consider 13 a symbol of bad luck. Widely viewed as an

unlucky number by anyone who believes in superstitions, 13 is a number most athletes avoid. Arizona Cardinals quarterback Kurt Warner was one of only five NFL players who wore No. 13 during the 2008 season.

This year, Moss is among a handful of Central Texas football players wearing No. 13.

Moss chose the number to honor his father, Max, who wore the number in high school and later at Rice. Max's father, Jack, a former coach, is-

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# LUCKY 13

Throw out the black cats and broken mirrors, these Central Texas football No. 13s have shirked superstition

# JERSEY: Players haven't seen negative impact from No. 13

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sued his son that number, and Max was one of only two players who wore No. 13 during Jack's 30 years as a coach.

"I've worn No. 13 since I was about 8 years old," Chet Moss said. "It's not unusual for me to have it because I grew up with it."

Bastrop linebacker A.C. Padilla, whose team opens the playoffs tonight against New Braunfels, has no family ties to No. 13. He picked it because one of his favorite baseball players, slugger Alex Rodriguez, has built a pretty impressive career with Seattle, Texas and the New York Yankees.

"I really didn't like A-Rod when he played for the Rangers, but when he put on the pinstripes (in New York), I became a fan," Padilla said.

Padilla's favorite Yankee is shortstop Derek Jeter, who wears No. 2, but because his friend Pete Rodriguez already wore No. 2, Padilla switched to A-Rod's number.

Padilla said he also considered No. 4 because he's a big Brett Favre fan, but declined because "it doesn't sound defensive enough."

Padilla does have one superstition he steadfastly observes, although it has nothing to do with jersey numbers. On Bastrop's game days, he makes sure to avoid girls.

## The shirt off their backs

Some notable athletes who chose jersey No. 13:

Athlete	Sport	Best known as ...
Wilt Chamberlain	Basketball	NBA legend
Dave Concepcion	Baseball	Big Red Machine's shortstop
Ozzie Guillen	Baseball	Cardinals' acrobatic shortstop
Kristine Lilly	Soccer	Two-time World Cup champ
Dan Marino	Football	Hall of Fame QB
Don Maynard	Football	Favorite target of Joe Namath
Steve Nash	Basketball	Two-time NBA MVP
Alex Rodriguez	Baseball	Sport's \$275 million man
Omar Vizquel	Baseball	Slick-fielding shortstop
Kurt Warner	Football	Super Bowl-winning QB

**Note:** Basketball players Tim Duncan, Yao Ming, Chris Mullin and Shaquille O'Neal all wore No. 13 in the Olympics.

"They can throw your focus off really quick," he said.

Pflugerville defensive lineman Jamal Lee said it was his father's idea for him to wear No. 13. Although friends and teammates often mention that it's supposedly an unlucky number, Lee disagreed.

"It's just a number," he said, "and I like it."

Travis kicker Alan Gaytan chose to wear jersey No. 13 simply because No. 12 was already issued to another player, he recalled. On his first field-goal attempt as a sophomore, Gaytan split the uprights from 47 yards out, a clear indication he would be fine with

that jersey.

If any high school football player can dispel than myth that 13 is an unlucky number, it's Lake Travis flex back Andy Erickson.

He points out that NBA great Wilt Chamberlain and Dan Marino, one of the greatest passers in NFL history, fared OK while wearing 13. He could have added perennial NBA All-Star Steve Nash and NFL Hall of Fame receiver Don Maynard to that list.

Erickson is a vital part of a Lake Travis football team that brought a 40-game winning streak into its playoff game against Crockett on Thursday night. Since a loss to

Westlake in September 2007, the Cavaliers have won two straight Class 4A championships, and they have averaged 51 points a game this fall.

"Yes, I had heard things about the number being unlucky, but I think just the opposite by believing it's lucky," said Erickson, who led all 4A receivers in Central Texas this fall with 950 yards on 41 catches.

Cedar Park's Moss also has been successful this season, which continues tonight as the Timberwolves face Cypress Ridge in a bi-district playoff game. The T'wolves are the only team to defeat Stony Point, the area's top Class 5A team for most of the year.

A junior, Moss is being recruited by several major-college teams, including Texas, Texas Tech, SMU and Colorado. No matter where he plays after he graduates, he plans to request jersey No. 13.

As for Erickson, he will not worry about walking under ladders or staring at cracked mirrors as Lake Travis chases another state championship. The Cavs are 41-1 during his three years as a varsity player, a streak that a supposedly unlucky number has not been able to touch.

"I'm not a very superstitious person," Erickson said, "but I do enjoy a nice cup of tea on Sunday."

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