

# Plenty of crowns to go around

Romeo is Red king as homecoming queen has role in win

**By George Pohly**

Macomb Daily Sports Editor

Romeo's Autumn to Remember

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## **High School Football**

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continued with the Bulldogs snaring the outright football championship in the Macomb Area Conference Red Division.

Ryan Burkard ran for four first-half touchdowns and added

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# BULLDOGS: Roll to 49-21 win over Stevenson to win MAC Red championship

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a fifth after halftime Friday night to lead Romeo to a 49-21 homecoming victory over Stevenson that completed a 5-0 run through the Red and gave the Bulldogs their first championship in the MAC's top tier.

"It's tremendous," Romeo coach Jason Couch said on a night when one of the Bulldogs was named homecoming queen. "A lot of credit goes to all of our seniors. This has been a goal of theirs, winning the conference. They've done a great job of leading. They brought the juniors up with them."

Burkard, a senior who took over from Central Michigan re-

cruit Ben Brown as the feature running back in the Bulldogs' offense, scored on runs of one and 15 yards in the second quarter as Romeo opened a 39-13 lead before a capacity crowd.

Romeo's seventh straight victory, following a season-opening loss at Troy, gave the Bulldogs their first league championship since they won the MAC White Division in 2006.

Romeo joined the Red in 2008, going 3-2 in the Red that year and in 2009.

The football success continues a wave of good fortune that has carried Romeo this fall.

Romeo has won MAC White championships in volleyball and

golf, and the boys and girls cross country teams are in first place in the White. The tennis team qualified for the Division 1 state finals.

"I think this has been the best start to a school year that we've had since I've been at the school," said Couch, a former Romeo player who joined the coaching staff in 2001.

"The camaraderie and the school spirit have been great."

Homecoming activities, including dress-up days, were embraced by most of the student body this year, Couch said.

"Everybody feels a part of it, and they should," Couch said.

"We get a tremendous amount of

support from the students, the administration and our fans.

That makes it so much more fun.

"I look forward to Mondays. People are positive and upbeat. Athletics is a huge part of the school climate. When you've got some successful programs, it makes it even better."

Burkard ran for a 2-point conversion following a Stevenson penalty to give Romeo an 8-7 lead, after the Titans had scored on the game's first possession on Connor Harvey's 20-yard touchdown pass to Dylan Cooper.

Nathan Fraeyman set up Burkard's score with an 84-yard kickoff return.

After Evan Simpson's 21-yard

field goal gave Romeo an 11-7 lead, Romeo's Zachary Bellas recovered a fumble near midfield. A 19-yard pass from Blake Laurain to Taylor Brynaert set up Burkard's second touchdown of the night, a seven-yard run.

Stevenson got closer when Robert Marshall returned the ensuing kickoff 88 yards for a touchdown, but Romeo's 21-point second quarter pushed the Titans into a deep hole.

The quarter featured a 63-yard drive capped by Burkard's one-yard TD run; a fourth-down sack by Joe Bacci near midfield that snuffed a once-promising Stevenson possession; a 34-yard pass from Bellas to Brynaert that

set up Burkard's 15-yard TD run; an interception by Bellas that set up Laurain's Michael Vick-style dive on a three-yard touchdown run; two PAT kicks by Simpson and a point-after boot by senior Ashley Flinn, who at halftime was named homecoming queen.

Burkard added a fifth touchdown and newly crowned queen Flinn kicked a 24-yard field goal in the third quarter to close Romeo's scoring.

Stevenson, which posted its first victory of the season last week, against Chippewa Valley, is 1-7 overall. The Titans must beat Grosse Pointe North next week to avoid their poorest record since Stevenson went 0-9 in 1968.