

Sister of Tigers' Bresee dies of brain cancer

By Ian Taylor

## The Journal

It was hard to miss the messages of love for Ella Bresee from the Clemson football team during its win over Furman last Saturday at Memorial Stadium.



*Clemson defensive tackle Bryan Bresee (11), seen during the Tigers' win over Furman last Saturday in Clemson, announced on Thursday that his 15-year-old sister, Ella, has died after battling brain cancer. She was 15. (Caleb Gilbert / The Journal)*

A singular phrase was emblazoned on shirts, written on players' athletic tape and projected as far as it would go — "E11a Strong."

The 15-year-old sister of star defensive tackle Bryan Bresee, Ella was battling an aggressive form of brain cancer and was an inspiration to the team, head coach Dabo Swinney said on multiple occasions. The Furman game was played in her honor, with the teenager speaking to the team on Wednesday, but a setback forced her to miss the game and be airlifted back to Washington, D.C. — not far from home in Damascus, Md. — on Friday.

On Thursday morning, Bresee announced his sister died.

"My beautiful sister Ella you amazed me every single day with the fight that you put up and how joyful you were constantly through this battle," he wrote on Instagram. "Never did I think I would be sitting here today saying bye to you. I want to thank you for bringing happiness to not only me but so many people. You are the best sister a brother could ask for and I know for a fact heaven has gained a beautiful angel today. Love you forever and always Ella bear."

In a statement, Swinney said he was “stronger today for having experienced Ella’s strength and courage.”

“Our prayers continue to be with the entire Bresee family,” the statement read. “We are all so appreciative of all of the love and support that has been shown by the Clemson Family and so many others during this time. Ella was such a sweet spirit, and her spirit will continue to live on throughout the Bresee family and everyone who had the opportunity to know her.”

Clemson athletic director Graham Neff said on Twitter that Ella had a “profound impact on our football program, and we stand with the entire Bresee family during this time. We are thankful for the outpouring of support from this community.”

Fans, players and programs from around the country have been voicing their support of Bresee and his family through #ELLASTRONG since the announcement.

Tigers offensive tackle Jordan McFadden tweeted, “Prayers for the Bresee family. So glad we got to see Ella last week. Rest easy sweet soul!!!”

After the game against Furman, Bresee flew home to be with his family, and his status for the fifth-ranked Tigers’ game against Louisiana Tech on Saturday (8 p.m., ACCN) has been in doubt since. Swinney said Wednesday that Bresee would play if he wanted to, but that he had “more important things than football” on his plate.

Bresee was nominated for the 2022 Capital One Orange Bowl-FWAA Courage Award on Wednesday after posting two tackles and a quarterback hurry against the Paladins.

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