



JIM LEONHARD

DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

FIRST-AND-10

JIM LEONHARD was named defensive coordinator of the Bills on January 31, 2026. Leonhard originally joined the NFL ranks with the Broncos in 2024 and spent the 2025 season as the team's defensive pass game coordinator/assistant head coach. He has eight years of college coaching experience, having spent time at Illinois (2023) and his alma mater Wisconsin (2017-22).

COACHING SHOUTOUTS

2024-25: (Denver Broncos)

- Led a Broncos pass defense in 2025 that ranked second in opponent completion percentage (57.8), seventh in passing yards allowed per game (187.2) and led the league in sacks (68).
- Helped the Broncos earn their second straight playoff berth (2024-25) and clinch the AFC West and No. 1 seed for the first time since 2015.
- In 2024, CB Pat Surtain II became just the second player in Broncos history to be named Associated Press Defensive Player of the Year. On the season, Surtain allowed the fewest passing yards (306) and second-lowest passer rating when targeted (59.1) among cornerbacks with at least 375 coverage snaps per NextGen Stats.

- Under his guidance, the Broncos allowed the sixth-fewest passing touchdowns (22) along with the sixth-best touchdown to interception ratio mark (1.5) and passer rating against (86.2) among all NFL teams in 2024.

2023: (Illinois)

- Was named Senior Football Analyst for the Illinois football program in July 2023.

2017-22: (Wisconsin)

- Spent seven seasons at Wisconsin, including six years as the defensive coordinator and defensive backs coach (2017-22) and one season as defensive backs coach (2016).
- Named the Badgers' interim head coach for the last seven games of the 2022 season, leading the team to a 4-3 record.

COACHING SHOUTOUTS

2017-22: (Wisconsin - continued)

- Oversaw one of the nation's most prolific defenses, ranking first among all Power 5 teams in first downs per game (15.4), third-down percentage (30.8) and yards per game (288.0) from 2017-22. Leonhard's defense also placed in the Top 5 in interception yards (1,337—2nd), takeaways (132—3rd), interceptions (87—3rd), touchdowns (157—T-3rd), interception touchdowns scored (11—T-4th) and points per game (17.9—5th) in that span.
- Led a Badgers' defense in 2021 that averaged only 239.1 yards per game, the third-best mark in school history and the fewest yards allowed by a Wisconsin defense since 1954. His defense also became just the second FBS team since 2008 to allow fewer than 70.0 rush yards per game for a season, giving up just 64.8 yards on the ground per game.
- A 2017 finalist for the Broyles Award—given annually to the best assistant coach in college football—Leonhard was responsible for the development of four Associated Press All-Americans, nine All-Big Ten first-teamers and the 2021 Big Ten Linebacker of the Year in linebacker Leo Chenal.

PLAYING SHOUTOUTS

- Spent 10 seasons in the NFL after signing as a UDFA safety with Buffalo (2005-07, '13), Baltimore (2008), the New York Jets (2009-11), Denver (2012) and Cleveland (2014). Appeared in 142 career games (73 starts) and produced a total of 396 tackles (307 solo), 4.5 sacks, 14 interceptions (247 yds., 1 TD), 35 passes defended, two forced fumbles and five fumble recoveries.
- A 2015 inductee to the Wisconsin Athletic Hall of Fame, Leonhard played four years with the Badgers, earning three first-team All-America and first-team All-Big Ten (2002-04) accolades after originally joining the program as a walk-on.

PERSONAL

- A native of Tony, Wisconsin. Leonhard and his wife, Katie, have three sons: Reese, Graham and Pierce.