



# Leighton Vander Esch

## Boise State

**HEIGHT:** 6'4"**WEIGHT:** 256**ARMS:** 34"**COMBINE:****40 YD DASH:** 4.65**3 CONE:** 6.88**20 YD SHUTTLE:** 4.15**VERT:** 39.5"

### PROS

- Throwback linebacker with huge size and frame
- "Wow" sort of speed
- Explosive downhill threat, great closing burst
- Good tackler who doesn't usually miss
- Run instincts are fantastic
- Can recover when out of position
- Quick diagnostic skills at snap, few false steps
- Shows ability to play through block
- Great patience, can scrape over the top to play

### CONS

- A bit stiff sometimes in his movements
- Doesn't use long arms to shed blocks
- Play strength through contact can be better
- Pass game instincts are a work in progress
- Doesn't play up to size all the time
- Not a pass rusher by any means

## SUMMARY

Boise State redshirt junior Leighton Vander Esch is a throwback, from his playing style to his 80's action movie villain name. In an era of smaller and smaller linebackers who play more like strong safeties, Vander Esch stands out at 6'4", 256 pounds. In his first full, healthy season for the Broncos, the Riggins, ID native exploded onto the scene with 141 tackles, eight and a half for a loss, five sacks, three interceptions, six passes defensed, four forced fumbles and a partridge in a pear tree. Vander Esch is not just big though, he's fast. He has an explosive first step and can cover ground in a hurry to get to the ball. He shows the ability to turn and run in any direction, despite a small amount of stiffness in his hips. Vander Esch is a good tackler and a sound decision-maker who patiently waits for the play to be declared before attacking. He shows the ability to fly downhill and attack gaps, as well as the ability to patiently scrape over the top and then clean up after the front side linebacker has cleared the way. He can work through the trash to the ball, and shows decent passing game instincts. One disappointing aspect of his game though is that he doesn't play bigger. Vander Esch has incredibly long arms and a powerful build that should make it easy for him to attack and shed blocks on the way to the football. He allows linemen to make first contact and gives ground to try and run around blocks after the blocker has locked on. Part of this is due to his pad level, which needs to be lower on contact. Despite this shortcoming, Vander Esch does show the ability to attack the proper shoulder of guards and keep his outside shoulder free to make the play in the hole when run fitting. As a pass defender, he's still a work in progress who's instincts wane the longer the play goes on. He needs to have a better understanding of where the receivers are going and continue his drop to close windows. With his size, speed and explosive strength, Vander Esch has the potential to be a franchise changing middle linebacker who can play in any scheme. He's a clear first round pick whose name will begin to be mentioned in the Top 15.