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Determining $\pi^0 A_{LL}$ from STAR 2012 Endcap Calorimeter Data
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Background
The STAR Experiment, located at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC) at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, uses longitudinally polarized proton-proton collisions to produce neutral pions ($\pi^0$) whose production exhibits an asymmetry ($A_{LL}$). By measuring $A_{LL}$, the gluon contribution to the spin of the proton can be studied. The STAR detector (Fig 1) is located along the 2.3 mile RHIC circumference (Fig 2). As seen in Fig 4, the neutral pion decays into two photons essentially immediately ($\sim 10^{-16}$). The analysis reported here is based on data taken in 2012 for 500 GeV center of mass energy of the colliding protons.

Determining $A_{LL}$
The $\pi^0$ asymmetry ($A_{LL}$) is an imbalance in the $\pi^0$ production in the different spin states of the colliding protons. There are four spin states the beam could have, but they can be grouped based on the longitudinal polarization direction that is either parallel or antiparallel to the beam momentum (Fig 3). Using the following formulas, the $A_{LL}$ can be calculated.

$$A_{LL} = \frac{\sum_{runs} P_{R} P_{B} (N^{++} - N^{--})}{\sum_{runs} P_{R} P_{B} (N^{++} + N^{--})}$$

where $N^{++}$ and $N^{--}$ are the numbers of $\pi^0$s in an antiparallel spin state and a parallel spin state, respectively.

Fitting Invariant Mass Spectra
The two photon invariant mass histograms were fitted with a skewed gaussian for the $\pi^0$ peak and a background function. Two different background functions were compared; a Chebyshev function and a modified Planck function. Fitting is done in two steps: (1) Fit spin combined histograms to determine the signal and background parameters (2) Fit spin sorted histograms with the above parameters fixed, to determine the normalizations. The number of $\pi^0$s in each spin state is found by integrating the fitted Gaussian function within $\pm 3$ sigma of the mean. This information can then be used to find the $\pi^0$ asymmetry ($A_{LL}$).

Skewed Gaussian:
$$f(x) = a e^{-0.5(c(1+4d(x-b))^2)}$$

Chebyshev Function:
$$f(x) = c + c_2(x-x_1)x + c_3(x-x_1)(x-x_2)x + \ldots$$

Modified Planck Function:
$$f(x) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-a(x-b)}}$$

Grouping
The 2012 data set contains over 500 runs. If each run was analyzed individually, the statistics would be really low. In order to increase statistics, the data were divided into 16 groups. Fig 7 shows the number of $\pi^0$s vs $p_T$ for a single group. This demonstrates that the number of $\pi^0$s depends strongly on $p_T$. Dividing the data into groups gives more events especially in the lowest and the highest $p_T$ bins. Similarly, Fig 8 demonstrates how as $p_T$ changes, the background changes. Two different methods of grouping was used in order to correct for any systematic error that might have occurred do to the grouping. The first method of grouping was created based on fill number and luminosity (Fig 9). The relative luminosity remained relatively constant across each fill, so fills with similar luminosity values were grouped together. The second method of grouping placed runs together based on their polarization. Invariant mass plots were created using the 16 groups at each $p_T$ (ranging from 3.5-15.5 GeV/c) and fitted to find the $A_{LL}$.

Future Work
Further work includes analyzing the second method of grouping (based on polarization) in order to better understand any systematic errors that occurred from grouping the runs. In addition, the data set may be looked at run by run in order to avoid error that may occur by using averages from each group. We expect the 2012 data set to significantly reduce the error bars when compared to the published results from work done with data from 2006¹ (Fig 10).