

## Observation of $B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0$ and search for $B$ -meson decays to $b_1^0 K^0$ and $b_1 \pi^0$

B. Aubert,<sup>1</sup> M. Bona,<sup>1</sup> Y. Karyotakis,<sup>1</sup> J. P. Lees,<sup>1</sup> V. Poireau,<sup>1</sup> E. Prencipe,<sup>1</sup> X. Prudent,<sup>1</sup> V. Tisserand,<sup>1</sup>  
J. Garra Tico,<sup>2</sup> E. Grauges,<sup>2</sup> L. Lopez<sup>ab,3</sup>, A. Palano<sup>ab,3</sup>, M. Pappagallo<sup>ab,3</sup>, G. Eigen,<sup>4</sup> B. Stugu,<sup>4</sup> L. Sun,<sup>4</sup>  
G. S. Abrams,<sup>5</sup> M. Battaglia,<sup>5</sup> D. N. Brown,<sup>5</sup> R. N. Cahn,<sup>5</sup> R. G. Jacobsen,<sup>5</sup> L. T. Kerth,<sup>5</sup> Yu. G. Kolomensky,<sup>5</sup>  
G. Kukartsev,<sup>5</sup> G. Lynch,<sup>5</sup> I. L. Osipenkov,<sup>5</sup> M. T. Ronan,<sup>5,\*</sup> K. Tackmann,<sup>5</sup> T. Tanabe,<sup>5</sup> C. M. Hawkes,<sup>6</sup> N. Soni,<sup>6</sup>  
A. T. Watson,<sup>6</sup> H. Koch,<sup>7</sup> T. Schroeder,<sup>7</sup> D. Walker,<sup>8</sup> D. J. Asgeirsson,<sup>9</sup> T. Cuhadar-Donszelmann,<sup>9</sup> B. G. Fulsom,<sup>9</sup>  
C. Hearty,<sup>9</sup> T. S. Mattison,<sup>9</sup> J. A. McKenna,<sup>9</sup> M. Barrett,<sup>10</sup> A. Khan,<sup>10</sup> L. Teodorescu,<sup>10</sup> V. E. Blinov,<sup>11</sup>  
A. D. Bukin,<sup>11</sup> A. R. Buzykaev,<sup>11</sup> V. P. Druzhinin,<sup>11</sup> V. B. Golubev,<sup>11</sup> A. P. Onuchin,<sup>11</sup> S. I. Serebnyakov,<sup>11</sup>  
Yu. I. Skovpen,<sup>11</sup> E. P. Solodov,<sup>11</sup> K. Yu. Todyshev,<sup>11</sup> M. Bondioli,<sup>12</sup> S. Curry,<sup>12</sup> I. Eschrich,<sup>12</sup> D. Kirkby,<sup>12</sup>  
A. J. Lankford,<sup>12</sup> P. Lund,<sup>12</sup> M. Mandelkern,<sup>12</sup> E. C. Martin,<sup>12</sup> D. P. Stoker,<sup>12</sup> S. Abachi,<sup>13</sup> C. Buchanan,<sup>13</sup>  
J. W. Gary,<sup>14</sup> F. Liu,<sup>14</sup> O. Long,<sup>14</sup> B. C. Shen,<sup>14,\*</sup> G. M. Vitug,<sup>14</sup> Z. Yasin,<sup>14</sup> L. Zhang,<sup>14</sup> V. Sharma,<sup>15</sup>  
C. Campagnari,<sup>16</sup> T. M. Hong,<sup>16</sup> D. Kovalskiy,<sup>16</sup> M. A. Mazur,<sup>16</sup> J. D. Richman,<sup>16</sup> T. W. Beck,<sup>17</sup> A. M. Eisner,<sup>17</sup>  
C. J. Flacco,<sup>17</sup> C. A. Heusch,<sup>17</sup> J. Kroseberg,<sup>17</sup> W. S. Lockman,<sup>17</sup> T. Schalk,<sup>17</sup> B. A. Schumm,<sup>17</sup> A. Seiden,<sup>17</sup>  
L. Wang,<sup>17</sup> M. G. Wilson,<sup>17</sup> L. O. Winstrom,<sup>17</sup> C. H. Cheng,<sup>18</sup> D. A. Doll,<sup>18</sup> B. Echenard,<sup>18</sup> F. Fang,<sup>18</sup>  
D. G. Hitlin,<sup>18</sup> I. Narsky,<sup>18</sup> T. Piatenko,<sup>18</sup> F. C. Porter,<sup>18</sup> R. Andreassen,<sup>19</sup> G. Mancinelli,<sup>19</sup> B. T. Meadows,<sup>19</sup>  
K. Mishra,<sup>19</sup> M. D. Sokoloff,<sup>19</sup> F. Blanc,<sup>20</sup> P. C. Bloom,<sup>20</sup> Z. C. Clifton,<sup>20</sup> W. T. Ford,<sup>20</sup> A. Gaz,<sup>20</sup>  
J. F. Hirschauer,<sup>20</sup> A. Kreisel,<sup>20</sup> M. Nagel,<sup>20</sup> U. Nauenberg,<sup>20</sup> J. G. Smith,<sup>20</sup> K. A. Ulmer,<sup>20</sup> S. R. Wagner,<sup>20</sup>  
R. Ayad,<sup>21,†</sup> A. Soffer,<sup>21,‡</sup> W. H. Toki,<sup>21</sup> R. J. Wilson,<sup>21</sup> D. D. Altenburg,<sup>22</sup> E. Feltresi,<sup>22</sup> A. Hauke,<sup>22</sup> H. Jasper,<sup>22</sup>  
M. Karbach,<sup>22</sup> J. Merkel,<sup>22</sup> A. Petzold,<sup>22</sup> B. Spaan,<sup>22</sup> K. Wacker,<sup>22</sup> M. J. Kobel,<sup>23</sup> W. F. Mader,<sup>23</sup> R. Nogowski,<sup>23</sup>  
K. R. Schubert,<sup>23</sup> R. Schwierz,<sup>23</sup> J. E. Sundermann,<sup>23</sup> A. Volk,<sup>23</sup> D. Bernard,<sup>24</sup> G. R. Bonneaud,<sup>24</sup> E. Latour,<sup>24</sup>  
Ch. Thiebaux,<sup>24</sup> M. Verderi,<sup>24</sup> P. J. Clark,<sup>25</sup> W. Gradl,<sup>25</sup> S. Playfer,<sup>25</sup> J. E. Watson,<sup>25</sup> M. Andreotti<sup>ab,26</sup>,  
D. Bettoni<sup>a,26</sup>, C. Bozzi<sup>a,26</sup>, R. Calabrese<sup>ab,26</sup>, A. Cecchi<sup>ab,26</sup>, G. Cibinetto<sup>ab,26</sup>, P. Franchini<sup>ab,26</sup>, E. Luppi<sup>ab,26</sup>,  
M. Negrini<sup>ab,26</sup>, A. Petrella<sup>ab,26</sup>, L. Piemontese<sup>a,26</sup>, V. Santoro<sup>ab,26</sup>, R. Baldini-Ferrolì,<sup>27</sup> A. Calcaterra,<sup>27</sup>  
R. de Sangro,<sup>27</sup> G. Finocchiaro,<sup>27</sup> S. Pacetti,<sup>27</sup> P. Patteri,<sup>27</sup> I. M. Peruzzi,<sup>27,§</sup> M. Piccolo,<sup>27</sup> M. Rama,<sup>27</sup>  
A. Zallo,<sup>27</sup> A. Buzzo<sup>a,28</sup>, R. Contri<sup>ab,28</sup>, M. Lo Vetere<sup>ab,28</sup>, M. M. Macri<sup>a,28</sup>, M. R. Monge<sup>ab,28</sup>, S. Passaggio<sup>a,28</sup>,  
C. Patrignani<sup>ab,28</sup>, E. Robutti<sup>a,28</sup>, A. Santroni<sup>ab,28</sup>, S. Tosi<sup>ab,28</sup>, K. S. Chaisanguanthum,<sup>29</sup> M. Morii,<sup>29</sup>  
R. S. Dubitzky,<sup>30</sup> J. Marks,<sup>30</sup> S. Schenk,<sup>30</sup> U. Uwer,<sup>30</sup> V. Klose,<sup>31</sup> H. M. Lacker,<sup>31</sup> G. De Nardo<sup>ab,32</sup>, L. Lista<sup>a,32</sup>,  
D. Monorchio<sup>ab,32</sup>, G. Onorato<sup>ab,32</sup>, C. Sciacca<sup>ab,32</sup>, D. J. Bard,<sup>33</sup> P. D. Dauncey,<sup>33</sup> J. A. Nash,<sup>33</sup> W. Panduro  
Vazquez,<sup>33</sup> M. Tibbetts,<sup>33</sup> P. K. Behera,<sup>34</sup> X. Chai,<sup>34</sup> M. J. Charles,<sup>34</sup> U. Mallik,<sup>34</sup> J. Cochran,<sup>35</sup> H. B. Crawley,<sup>35</sup>  
L. Dong,<sup>35</sup> W. T. Meyer,<sup>35</sup> S. Prell,<sup>35</sup> E. I. Rosenberg,<sup>35</sup> A. E. Rubin,<sup>35</sup> Y. Y. Gao,<sup>36</sup> A. V. Gritsan,<sup>36</sup> Z. J. Guo,<sup>36</sup>  
C. K. Lae,<sup>36</sup> A. G. Denig,<sup>37</sup> M. Fritsch,<sup>37</sup> G. Schott,<sup>37</sup> N. Arnaud,<sup>38</sup> J. Béquilleux,<sup>38</sup> A. D'Orazio,<sup>38</sup> M. Davier,<sup>38</sup>  
J. Firmino da Costa,<sup>38</sup> G. Grosdidier,<sup>38</sup> A. Höcker,<sup>38</sup> V. Lepeltier,<sup>38</sup> F. Le Diberder,<sup>38</sup> A. M. Lutz,<sup>38</sup> S. Pruvot,<sup>38</sup>  
P. Roudeau,<sup>38</sup> M. H. Schune,<sup>38</sup> J. Serrano,<sup>38</sup> V. Sordini,<sup>38,¶</sup> A. Stocchi,<sup>38</sup> G. Wormser,<sup>38</sup> D. J. Lange,<sup>39</sup>  
D. M. Wright,<sup>39</sup> I. Bingham,<sup>40</sup> J. P. Burke,<sup>40</sup> C. A. Chavez,<sup>40</sup> J. R. Fry,<sup>40</sup> E. Gabathuler,<sup>40</sup> R. Gamet,<sup>40</sup>  
D. E. Hutchcroft,<sup>40</sup> D. J. Payne,<sup>40</sup> C. Touramanis,<sup>40</sup> A. J. Bevan,<sup>41</sup> K. A. George,<sup>41</sup> F. Di Lodovico,<sup>41</sup> R. Sacco,<sup>41</sup>  
M. Sigamani,<sup>41</sup> G. Cowan,<sup>42</sup> H. U. Flaecher,<sup>42</sup> D. A. Hopkins,<sup>42</sup> S. Paramesvaran,<sup>42</sup> F. Salvatore,<sup>42</sup> A. C. Wren,<sup>42</sup>  
D. N. Brown,<sup>43</sup> C. L. Davis,<sup>43</sup> K. E. Alwyn,<sup>44</sup> N. R. Barlow,<sup>44</sup> R. J. Barlow,<sup>44</sup> Y. M. Chia,<sup>44</sup> C. L. Edgar,<sup>44</sup>  
G. D. Lafferty,<sup>44</sup> T. J. West,<sup>44</sup> J. I. Yi,<sup>44</sup> J. Anderson,<sup>45</sup> C. Chen,<sup>45</sup> A. Jawahery,<sup>45</sup> D. A. Roberts,<sup>45</sup> G. Simi,<sup>45</sup>  
J. M. Tuggle,<sup>45</sup> C. Dallapiccola,<sup>46</sup> S. S. Hertzbach,<sup>46</sup> X. Li,<sup>46</sup> E. Salvati,<sup>46</sup> S. Saremi,<sup>46</sup> R. Cowan,<sup>47</sup> D. Dujmic,<sup>47</sup>  
P. H. Fisher,<sup>47</sup> K. Koeneke,<sup>47</sup> G. Sciolla,<sup>47</sup> M. Spitznagel,<sup>47</sup> F. Taylor,<sup>47</sup> R. K. Yamamoto,<sup>47</sup> M. Zhao,<sup>47</sup>  
S. E. Mclachlin,<sup>48,\*</sup> P. M. Patel,<sup>48</sup> S. H. Robertson,<sup>48</sup> A. Lazzaro<sup>ab,49</sup>, V. Lombardo<sup>a,49</sup>, F. Palombo<sup>ab,49</sup>,  
J. M. Bauer,<sup>50</sup> L. Cremaldi,<sup>50</sup> V. Eschenburg,<sup>50</sup> R. Godang,<sup>50,\*\*</sup> R. Kroeger,<sup>50</sup> D. A. Sanders,<sup>50</sup> D. J. Summers,<sup>50</sup>  
H. W. Zhao,<sup>50</sup> M. Simard,<sup>51</sup> P. Taras,<sup>51</sup> F. B. Viaud,<sup>51</sup> H. Nicholson,<sup>52</sup> M. A. Baak,<sup>53</sup> G. Raven,<sup>53</sup> H. L. Snoek,<sup>53</sup>  
C. P. Jessop,<sup>54</sup> K. J. Knoepfel,<sup>54</sup> J. M. LoSecco,<sup>54</sup> W. F. Wang,<sup>54</sup> G. Benelli,<sup>55</sup> L. A. Corwin,<sup>55</sup> K. Honscheid,<sup>55</sup>  
H. Kagan,<sup>55</sup> R. Kass,<sup>55</sup> J. P. Morris,<sup>55</sup> A. M. Rahimi,<sup>55</sup> J. J. Regensburger,<sup>55</sup> S. J. Sekula,<sup>55</sup> Q. K. Wong,<sup>55</sup>  
N. L. Blount,<sup>56</sup> J. Brau,<sup>56</sup> R. Frey,<sup>56</sup> O. Igonkina,<sup>56</sup> J. A. Kolb,<sup>56</sup> M. Lu,<sup>56</sup> R. Rahmat,<sup>56</sup> N. B. Sinev,<sup>56</sup> D. Strom,<sup>56</sup>

J. Strube,<sup>56</sup> E. Torrence,<sup>56</sup> G. Castelli<sup>ab,57</sup> N. Gagliardi<sup>ab,57</sup> M. Margoni<sup>ab,57</sup> M. Morandin<sup>a,57</sup> M. Posocco<sup>a,57</sup> M. Rotondo<sup>a,57</sup> F. Simonetto<sup>ab,57</sup> R. Stroili<sup>ab,57</sup> C. Voci<sup>ab,57</sup> P. del Amo Sanchez,<sup>58</sup> E. Ben-Haim,<sup>58</sup> H. Briand,<sup>58</sup> G. Calderini,<sup>58</sup> J. Chauveau,<sup>58</sup> P. David,<sup>58</sup> L. Del Buono,<sup>58</sup> O. Hamon,<sup>58</sup> Ph. Leruste,<sup>58</sup> J. Ocariz,<sup>58</sup> A. Perez,<sup>58</sup> J. Prendki,<sup>58</sup> L. Gladney,<sup>59</sup> M. Biasini<sup>ab,60</sup> R. Covarelli<sup>ab,60</sup> E. Manoni<sup>ab,60</sup> C. Angelini<sup>ab,61</sup> G. Batignani<sup>ab,61</sup> S. Bettarini<sup>ab,61</sup> M. Carpinelli<sup>ab,61,††</sup> A. Cervelli<sup>ab,61</sup> F. Forti<sup>ab,61</sup> M. A. Giorgi<sup>ab,61</sup> A. Lusiani<sup>ac,61</sup> G. Marchiori<sup>ab,61</sup> M. Morganti<sup>ab,61</sup> N. Neri<sup>ab,61</sup> E. Paoloni<sup>ab,61</sup> G. Rizzo<sup>ab,61</sup> J. J. Walsh<sup>a,61</sup> J. Biesiada,<sup>62</sup> D. Lopes Pegna,<sup>62</sup> C. Lu,<sup>62</sup> J. Olsen,<sup>62</sup> A. J. S. Smith,<sup>62</sup> A. V. Telnov,<sup>62</sup> F. Anulli<sup>a,63</sup> E. Baracchini<sup>ab,63</sup> G. Cavoto<sup>a,63</sup> D. del Re<sup>ab,63</sup> E. Di Marco<sup>ab,63</sup> R. Faccini<sup>ab,63</sup> F. Ferrarotto<sup>a,63</sup> F. Ferroni<sup>ab,63</sup> M. Gaspero<sup>ab,63</sup> P. D. Jackson<sup>a,63</sup> L. Li Gioi<sup>a,63</sup> M. A. Mazzoni<sup>a,63</sup> S. Morganti<sup>a,63</sup> G. Piredda<sup>a,63</sup> F. Polci<sup>ab,63</sup> F. Renga<sup>ab,63</sup> C. Voena<sup>a,63</sup> M. Ebert,<sup>64</sup> T. Hartmann,<sup>64</sup> H. Schröder,<sup>64</sup> R. Waldi,<sup>64</sup> T. Adye,<sup>65</sup> B. Franek,<sup>65</sup> E. O. Olaiya,<sup>65</sup> W. Roethel,<sup>65</sup> F. F. Wilson,<sup>65</sup> S. Emery,<sup>66</sup> M. Escalier,<sup>66</sup> L. Esteve,<sup>66</sup> A. Gaidot,<sup>66</sup> S. F. Ganzhur,<sup>66</sup> G. Hamel de Monchenault,<sup>66</sup> W. Kozanecki,<sup>66</sup> G. Vasseur,<sup>66</sup> Ch. Yèche,<sup>66</sup> M. Zito,<sup>66</sup> X. R. Chen,<sup>67</sup> H. Liu,<sup>67</sup> W. Park,<sup>67</sup> M. V. Purohit,<sup>67</sup> R. M. White,<sup>67</sup> J. R. Wilson,<sup>67</sup> M. T. Allen,<sup>68</sup> D. Aston,<sup>68</sup> R. Bartoldus,<sup>68</sup> P. Bechtel,<sup>68</sup> J. F. Benitez,<sup>68</sup> R. Cenci,<sup>68</sup> J. P. Coleman,<sup>68</sup> M. R. Convery,<sup>68</sup> J. C. Dingfelder,<sup>68</sup> J. Dorfan,<sup>68</sup> G. P. Dubois-Felsmann,<sup>68</sup> W. Dunwoodie,<sup>68</sup> R. C. Field,<sup>68</sup> A. M. Gabareen,<sup>68</sup> S. J. Gowdy,<sup>68</sup> M. T. Graham,<sup>68</sup> P. Grenier,<sup>68</sup> C. Hast,<sup>68</sup> W. R. Innes,<sup>68</sup> J. Kaminski,<sup>68</sup> M. H. Kelsey,<sup>68</sup> H. Kim,<sup>68</sup> P. Kim,<sup>68</sup> M. L. Kocian,<sup>68</sup> D. W. G. S. Leith,<sup>68</sup> S. Li,<sup>68</sup> B. Lindquist,<sup>68</sup> S. Luitz,<sup>68</sup> V. Luth,<sup>68</sup> H. L. Lynch,<sup>68</sup> D. B. MacFarlane,<sup>68</sup> H. Marsiske,<sup>68</sup> R. Messner,<sup>68</sup> D. R. Muller,<sup>68</sup> H. Neal,<sup>68</sup> S. Nelson,<sup>68</sup> C. P. O'Grady,<sup>68</sup> I. Ofte,<sup>68</sup> A. Perazzo,<sup>68</sup> M. Perl,<sup>68</sup> B. N. Ratcliff,<sup>68</sup> A. Roodman,<sup>68</sup> A. A. Salnikov,<sup>68</sup> R. H. Schindler,<sup>68</sup> J. Schwiening,<sup>68</sup> A. Snyder,<sup>68</sup> D. Su,<sup>68</sup> M. K. Sullivan,<sup>68</sup> K. Suzuki,<sup>68</sup> S. K. Swain,<sup>68</sup> J. M. Thompson,<sup>68</sup> J. Va'vra,<sup>68</sup> A. P. Wagner,<sup>68</sup> M. Weaver,<sup>68</sup> C. A. West,<sup>68</sup> W. J. Wisniewski,<sup>68</sup> M. Wittgen,<sup>68</sup> D. H. Wright,<sup>68</sup> H. W. Wulsin,<sup>68</sup> A. K. Yarritu,<sup>68</sup> K. Yi,<sup>68</sup> C. C. Young,<sup>68</sup> V. Ziegler,<sup>68</sup> P. R. Burchat,<sup>69</sup> A. J. Edwards,<sup>69</sup> S. A. Majewski,<sup>69</sup> T. S. Miyashita,<sup>69</sup> B. A. Petersen,<sup>69</sup> L. Wilden,<sup>69</sup> S. Ahmed,<sup>70</sup> M. S. Alam,<sup>70</sup> R. Bula,<sup>70</sup> J. A. Ernst,<sup>70</sup> B. Pan,<sup>70</sup> M. A. Saeed,<sup>70</sup> S. B. Zain,<sup>70</sup> S. M. Spanier,<sup>71</sup> B. J. Wogslund,<sup>71</sup> R. Eckmann,<sup>72</sup> J. L. Ritchie,<sup>72</sup> A. M. Ruland,<sup>72</sup> C. J. Schilling,<sup>72</sup> R. F. Schwitters,<sup>72</sup> B. W. Drummond,<sup>73</sup> J. M. Izen,<sup>73</sup> X. C. Lou,<sup>73</sup> F. Bianchi<sup>ab,74</sup> D. Gamba<sup>ab,74</sup> M. Pelliccioni<sup>ab,74</sup> M. Bomben<sup>ab,75</sup> L. Bosisio<sup>ab,75</sup> C. Cartaro<sup>ab,75</sup> G. Della Ricca<sup>ab,75</sup> L. Lanceri<sup>ab,75</sup> L. Vitale<sup>ab,75</sup> V. Azzolini,<sup>76</sup> N. Lopez-March,<sup>76</sup> F. Martinez-Vidal,<sup>76</sup> D. A. Milanes,<sup>76</sup> A. Oyanguren,<sup>76</sup> J. Albert,<sup>77</sup> Sw. Banerjee,<sup>77</sup> B. Bhuyan,<sup>77</sup> H. H. F. Choi,<sup>77</sup> K. Hamano,<sup>77</sup> R. Kowalewski,<sup>77</sup> M. J. Lewczuk,<sup>77</sup> I. M. Nugent,<sup>77</sup> J. M. Roney,<sup>77</sup> R. J. Sobie,<sup>77</sup> T. J. Gershon,<sup>78</sup> P. F. Harrison,<sup>78</sup> J. Ilic,<sup>78</sup> T. E. Latham,<sup>78</sup> G. B. Mohanty,<sup>78</sup> H. R. Band,<sup>79</sup> X. Chen,<sup>79</sup> S. Dasu,<sup>79</sup> K. T. Flood,<sup>79</sup> Y. Pan,<sup>79</sup> M. Pierini,<sup>79</sup> R. Prepost,<sup>79</sup> C. O. Vuosalo,<sup>79</sup> and S. L. Wu<sup>79</sup>

(The BABAR Collaboration)

<sup>1</sup>Laboratoire de Physique des Particules, IN2P3/CNRS et Université de Savoie, F-74941 Annecy-Le-Vieux, France

<sup>2</sup>Universitat de Barcelona, Facultat de Física, Departament ECM, E-08028 Barcelona, Spain

<sup>3</sup>INFN Sezione di Bari<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Bari<sup>b</sup>, I-70126 Bari, Italy

<sup>4</sup>University of Bergen, Institute of Physics, N-5007 Bergen, Norway

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and University of California, Berkeley, California 94720, USA

<sup>6</sup>University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, United Kingdom

<sup>7</sup>Ruhr Universität Bochum, Institut für Experimentalphysik 1, D-44780 Bochum, Germany

<sup>8</sup>University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1TL, United Kingdom

<sup>9</sup>University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada V6T 1Z1

<sup>10</sup>Brunel University, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 3PH, United Kingdom

<sup>11</sup>Budker Institute of Nuclear Physics, Novosibirsk 630090, Russia

<sup>12</sup>University of California at Irvine, Irvine, California 92697, USA

<sup>13</sup>University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California 90024, USA

<sup>14</sup>University of California at Riverside, Riverside, California 92521, USA

<sup>15</sup>University of California at San Diego, La Jolla, California 92093, USA

<sup>16</sup>University of California at Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, California 93106, USA

<sup>17</sup>University of California at Santa Cruz, Institute for Particle Physics, Santa Cruz, California 95064, USA

<sup>18</sup>California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, California 91125, USA

<sup>19</sup>University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221, USA

<sup>20</sup>University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado 80309, USA

<sup>21</sup>Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado 80523, USA

<sup>22</sup>Technische Universität Dortmund, Fakultät Physik, D-44221 Dortmund, Germany

<sup>23</sup>Technische Universität Dresden, Institut für Kern- und Teilchenphysik, D-01062 Dresden, Germany

<sup>24</sup>Laboratoire Leprince-Ringuet, CNRS/IN2P3, Ecole Polytechnique, F-91128 Palaiseau, France

<sup>25</sup>University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh EH9 3JZ, United Kingdom

- <sup>26</sup>INFN Sezione di Ferrara<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Ferrara<sup>b</sup>, I-44100 Ferrara, Italy
- <sup>27</sup>INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, I-00044 Frascati, Italy
- <sup>28</sup>INFN Sezione di Genova<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Genova<sup>b</sup>, I-16146 Genova, Italy
- <sup>29</sup>Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138, USA
- <sup>30</sup>Universität Heidelberg, Physikalisches Institut, Philosophenweg 12, D-69120 Heidelberg, Germany
- <sup>31</sup>Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Institut für Physik, Newtonstr. 15, D-12489 Berlin, Germany
- <sup>32</sup>INFN Sezione di Napoli<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Scienze Fisiche, Università di Napoli Federico II<sup>b</sup>, I-80126 Napoli, Italy
- <sup>33</sup>Imperial College London, London, SW7 2AZ, United Kingdom
- <sup>34</sup>University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa 52242, USA
- <sup>35</sup>Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011-3160, USA
- <sup>36</sup>Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, USA
- <sup>37</sup>Universität Karlsruhe, Institut für Experimentelle Kernphysik, D-76021 Karlsruhe, Germany
- <sup>38</sup>Laboratoire de l'Accélérateur Linéaire, IN2P3/CNRS et Université Paris-Sud 11, Centre Scientifique d'Orsay, B. P. 34, F-91898 ORSAY Cedex, France
- <sup>39</sup>Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Livermore, California 94550, USA
- <sup>40</sup>University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 7ZE, United Kingdom
- <sup>41</sup>Queen Mary, University of London, E1 4NS, United Kingdom
- <sup>42</sup>University of London, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX, United Kingdom
- <sup>43</sup>University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky 40292, USA
- <sup>44</sup>University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, United Kingdom
- <sup>45</sup>University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742, USA
- <sup>46</sup>University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts 01003, USA
- <sup>47</sup>Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Laboratory for Nuclear Science, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, USA
- <sup>48</sup>McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3A 2T8
- <sup>49</sup>INFN Sezione di Milano<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Milano<sup>b</sup>, I-20133 Milano, Italy
- <sup>50</sup>University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi 38677, USA
- <sup>51</sup>Université de Montréal, Physique des Particules, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3C 3J7
- <sup>52</sup>Mount Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts 01075, USA
- <sup>53</sup>NIKHEF, National Institute for Nuclear Physics and High Energy Physics, NL-1009 DB Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- <sup>54</sup>University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, USA
- <sup>55</sup>Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio 43210, USA
- <sup>56</sup>University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403, USA
- <sup>57</sup>INFN Sezione di Padova<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Padova<sup>b</sup>, I-35131 Padova, Italy
- <sup>58</sup>Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, IN2P3/CNRS, Université Pierre et Marie Curie-Paris6, Université Denis Diderot-Paris7, F-75252 Paris, France
- <sup>59</sup>University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104, USA
- <sup>60</sup>INFN Sezione di Perugia<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Perugia<sup>b</sup>, I-06100 Perugia, Italy
- <sup>61</sup>INFN Sezione di Pisa<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Pisa<sup>b</sup>; Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa<sup>c</sup>, I-56127 Pisa, Italy
- <sup>62</sup>Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544, USA
- <sup>63</sup>INFN Sezione di Roma<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Roma La Sapienza<sup>b</sup>, I-00185 Roma, Italy
- <sup>64</sup>Universität Rostock, D-18051 Rostock, Germany
- <sup>65</sup>Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0QX, United Kingdom
- <sup>66</sup>DSM/Dapnia, CEA/Saclay, F-91191 Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- <sup>67</sup>University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina 29208, USA
- <sup>68</sup>Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, Stanford, California 94309, USA
- <sup>69</sup>Stanford University, Stanford, California 94305-4060, USA
- <sup>70</sup>State University of New York, Albany, New York 12222, USA
- <sup>71</sup>University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996, USA
- <sup>72</sup>University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712, USA
- <sup>73</sup>University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, Texas 75083, USA
- <sup>74</sup>INFN Sezione di Torino<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica Sperimentale, Università di Torino<sup>b</sup>, I-10125 Torino, Italy
- <sup>75</sup>INFN Sezione di Trieste<sup>a</sup>; Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Trieste<sup>b</sup>, I-34127 Trieste, Italy
- <sup>76</sup>IFIC, Universitat de Valencia-CSIC, E-46071 Valencia, Spain
- <sup>77</sup>University of Victoria, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 3P6
- <sup>78</sup>Department of Physics, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, United Kingdom
- <sup>79</sup>University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, USA

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We present the results of searches for decays of  $B$  mesons to final states with a  $b_1$  meson and a neutral pion or kaon. The data, collected with the BABAR detector at the Stanford Linear Accelerator

Center, represent 465 million  $B\bar{B}$  pairs produced in  $e^+e^-$  annihilation. The results for the branching fractions are, in units of  $10^{-6}$ ,  $\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0) = 9.6 \pm 1.7 \pm 0.9$ ,  $\mathcal{B}(B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 K^0) = 5.1 \pm 1.8 \pm 0.5$  ( $< 7.8$ ),  $\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ \pi^0) = 1.8 \pm 0.9 \pm 0.2$  ( $< 3.3$ ), and  $\mathcal{B}(B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 \pi^0) = 0.4 \pm 0.8 \pm 0.2$  ( $< 1.9$ ), with the assumption that  $\mathcal{B}(b_1 \rightarrow \omega\pi) = 1$ . We also measure the charge asymmetry  $\mathcal{A}_{ch}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0) = -0.03 \pm 0.15 \pm 0.02$ . The first error quoted is statistical, the second systematic, and the upper limits in parentheses indicate the 90% confidence level.

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Recent searches for decays of  $B$  mesons to final states with an axial-vector meson and a pion or kaon have revealed modes with branching fractions that are rather large among charmless decays:  $(15 - 35) \times 10^{-6}$  for  $B \rightarrow a_1(\pi, K)$  [1, 2], and  $(7 - 11) \times 10^{-6}$  for charged pion and kaon in combination with a  $b_1^0$  or a  $b_1^+$  meson [3, 4]. In this paper we present the results of investigations of the remaining charge states with  $b_1$  accompanied by a  $\pi^0$  or  $K^0$ . No previous searches for these modes have been reported.

The mass and width of the  $b_1$  meson are  $1229.5 \pm 3.2$  MeV and  $142 \pm 9$  MeV, respectively, and the dominant decay is to  $\omega\pi$  [5]. In the quark model the  $b_1$  is the  $I^G = 1^+$  member of the  $J^{PC} = 1^{+-}$ ,  $^1P_1$  nonet. The Cabibbo-favored amplitudes that mediate these decays are those represented by color-suppressed tree diagrams for the modes with  $\pi^0$ , and ‘‘penguin’’ loop diagrams for those with  $K^0$ . Because the  $b_1$  meson has even  $G$ -parity, only amplitudes in which the  $b_1$  contains the spectator quark from the  $B$  meson are allowed, apart from isospin-breaking effects [6]. Direct  $CP$  violation would be indicated by a non-zero value of the asymmetry  $\mathcal{A}_{ch} \equiv (\Gamma^- - \Gamma^+)/(\Gamma^- + \Gamma^+)$  in the rates  $\Gamma^\pm(B^\pm \rightarrow F^\pm)$  for charged  $B$ -meson decays to final states  $F^\pm$ .

The available theoretical estimates of the branching fractions of  $B$  mesons to  $b_1\pi$  and  $b_1K$  come from calculations based on naïve factorization [7, 8], and on QCD factorization [9]. The latter incorporate light-cone distribution amplitudes evaluated from QCD sum rules, and predict branching fractions in quite good agreement with the measurements for  $B \rightarrow b_1\pi^+$  and  $B \rightarrow b_1K^+$  [3]. The expected branching fractions from QCD factorization are about  $10 \times 10^{-6}$  for  $B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0$ , and  $3 \times 10^{-6}$  or less for  $B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 K^0$  and  $B \rightarrow b_1\pi^0$  [9].

The data for these measurements were collected with the *BABAR* detector [10] at the PEP-II asymmetric  $e^+e^-$  collider located at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center. An integrated luminosity of  $424 \text{ fb}^{-1}$ , corresponding to  $(465 \pm 5) \times 10^6 B\bar{B}$  pairs, was produced by  $e^+e^-$  annihilation at the  $\Upsilon(4S)$  resonance (center-of-mass energy  $\sqrt{s} = 10.58 \text{ GeV}$ ). Charged particles from the  $e^+e^-$  interactions are detected, and their momenta measured, by a combination of five layers of double-sided silicon microstrip detectors and a 40-layer drift chamber, both operating in the 1.5 T magnetic field of a superconducting solenoid. Photons and electrons are identified with a CsI(Tl) electromagnetic calorimeter (EMC). Further

charged particle identification (PID) is provided by the average energy loss ( $dE/dx$ ) in the tracking devices and by an internally reflecting ring imaging Cherenkov detector (DIRC) covering the central region. A detailed Monte Carlo program (MC) is used to simulate the  $B$  production and decay sequences, and the detector response [11].

The  $b_1$  candidates are reconstructed through the decay sequence  $b_1 \rightarrow \omega\pi$ ,  $\omega \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-\pi^0$ , and  $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$ . The other primary daughter of the  $B$  meson is reconstructed as either  $K_S^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-$  or  $\pi^0 \rightarrow \gamma\gamma$ . For  $K_S^0$ , the invariant mass of the pion pair is required to lie between 486 and 510 MeV, i.e., within about 3.5 standard deviations of the nominal  $K_S^0$  mass [5]. The minimum energy for a  $\pi^0$ -daughter photon is 30 MeV (50 MeV for a primary  $\pi^0$ ), and the minimum energy of a  $\pi^0$  is 250 MeV. The invariant mass of the photon pair is required to lie between 120 and 150 MeV, or within about two standard deviations of the nominal  $\pi^0$  mass. For the  $b_1$  and  $\omega$ , whose masses are treated as observables in the maximum likelihood (ML) fit described below, we accept a range that includes wider sidebands (see Fig. 1). Secondary charged pions in  $b_1$  and  $\omega$  candidates are rejected if classified as protons, kaons, or electrons by their DIRC,  $dE/dx$ , and EMC PID signatures. For a  $K_S^0$  candidate we require a successful fit of the decay vertex with the flight direction constrained to the pion pair momentum direction, that yields a flight length greater than three times its uncertainty.

We reconstruct the  $B$ -meson candidate by combining the four-momenta of a pair of primary daughter mesons, using a fit that constrains all particles to a common vertex and the  $\pi^0$  mass to its nominal value. From the kinematics of  $\Upsilon(4S)$  decay we determine the energy-substituted mass  $m_{ES} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{4}s - \mathbf{p}_B^2}$  and energy difference  $\Delta E = E_B - \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{s}$ , where  $(E_B, \mathbf{p}_B)$  is the  $B$ -meson four-momentum vector, and all values are expressed in the  $\Upsilon(4S)$  rest frame. The resolution in  $m_{ES}$  is 2.4–2.8 MeV and in  $\Delta E$  is 22–46 MeV, depending on the decay mode. We require  $5.25 \text{ GeV} < m_{ES} < 5.29 \text{ GeV}$  and  $|\Delta E| < 100 \text{ MeV}$ .

We also impose restrictions on the helicity-frame decay angles of the  $b_1$  and  $\omega$  mesons. The helicity frame of a meson is defined as the rest frame of the meson with  $z$  axis along the direction of boost to that frame from the parent rest frame. For the decay  $b_1 \rightarrow \omega\pi$ ,  $\theta_{b_1}$  is the polar angle of the daughter pion, and for  $\omega \rightarrow 3\pi$ ,  $\theta_\omega$  is polar angle of the normal to the  $3\pi$  decay plane.

Since many misreconstructed candidates accumulate in a corner of the  $\cos\theta_{b_1}$  vs  $\cos\theta_\omega$  plane, we require  $\cos\theta_{b_1} \leq \min(1.0, 1.1 - 0.5 \times |\cos\theta_\omega|)$ .

Backgrounds arise primarily from random combinations of particles in continuum  $e^+e^- \rightarrow q\bar{q}$  events ( $q = u, d, s, c$ ). We reduce these with a requirement on the angle  $\theta_T$  between the thrust axis [12] of the  $B$  candidate in the  $\Upsilon(4S)$  frame and that of the charged tracks and neutral calorimeter clusters in the rest of the event (ROE). The event is required to contain at least one charged track not associated with the  $B$  candidate. The distribution is sharply peaked near  $|\cos\theta_T| = 1$  for  $q\bar{q}$  jet pairs, and nearly uniform for  $B$ -meson decays. The requirement, which optimizes the expected signal yield relative to its background-dominated statistical error, is  $|\cos\theta_T| < 0.7$ .

The average number of candidates found per event in the selected sample is in the range 1.3 to 1.6 (1.4 to 1.6 in signal MC), depending on the final state. We choose the candidate with the largest confidence level for the  $B$ -meson geometric fit.

In the ML fit we discriminate further against  $q\bar{q}$  background with a Fisher discriminant  $\mathcal{F}$  that combines five variables: the polar angles, with respect to the beam axis in the  $\Upsilon(4S)$  rest frame, of the  $B$  candidate momentum and of the  $B$  thrust axis; the flavor tagging category; and the zeroth and second angular moments  $L_{0,2}$  of the energy flow, excluding the  $B$  candidate, about the  $B$  thrust axis. The tagging category [13] is the class of candidate partially reconstructed from the ROE, designed to determine whether, in a signal event, it represents a  $B$  or  $\bar{B}$  meson. The moments are defined by  $L_j = \sum_i p_i \times |\cos\theta_i|^j$ , where  $\theta_i$  is the angle with respect to the  $B$  thrust axis of track or neutral cluster  $i$ ,  $p_i$  is its momentum, and the sum excludes the  $B$  candidate daughters. The Fisher variable provides about one standard deviation of separation between  $B$  decay events and combinatorial background.

We obtain yields for each channel from an extended ML fit with the input observables  $\Delta E$ ,  $m_{\text{ES}}$ ,  $\mathcal{F}$ , and the resonance masses  $m_{b_1}$  and  $m_\omega$ . The selected data sample sizes are given in Table I. Besides the signal events these samples contain  $q\bar{q}$  (dominant) and  $B\bar{B}$  with  $b \rightarrow c$  combinatorial background, and a fraction of cross feed from other charmless  $B\bar{B}$  modes, which we estimate from the simulation to be (0.5–1.1)%. The last include non-resonant  $\omega\pi\pi$ ,  $\omega K\pi$ , and modes that have final states different from the signal, but with similar kinematics so that broad peaks near those of the signal appear in some observables. We account for these with a separate component in the probability density function (PDF).

The likelihood function is

$$\mathcal{L} = \exp\left(-\sum_j Y_j\right) \prod_i \sum_j Y_j \times \mathcal{P}_j(m_{\text{ES}}^i) \mathcal{P}_j(\mathcal{F}^i) \mathcal{P}_j(\Delta E^i) \mathcal{P}_j(m_{b_1}^i) \mathcal{P}_j(m_\omega^i), \quad (1)$$

where  $N$  is the number of events in the sample, and for each component  $j$  (signal, combinatorial background, or charmless  $B\bar{B}$  cross feed),  $Y_j$  is the yield of events and  $\mathcal{P}_j(x^i)$  the PDF for observable  $x$  in event  $i$ . The signal component is further separated into two components (with proportions fixed in the fit for each mode) representing the correctly and incorrectly reconstructed candidates in events with true signal, as determined with MC. The fraction of misreconstructed candidates is 32–40%, depending on the mode. The factored form of the PDF indicated in Eq. 1 is a good approximation, particularly for the combinatorial  $q\bar{q}$  component, since we find correlations among observables in the data (which are mostly  $q\bar{q}$  background) are generally less than 2%, with none exceeding 5%. The effects of this approximation are determined in simulation and included in the bias corrections and systematic errors discussed below.

We determine the PDFs for the signal and  $B\bar{B}$  background components from fits to MC samples. We calibrate the resolutions in  $\Delta E$  and  $m_{\text{ES}}$  with large data control samples of  $B$  decays to charmed final states of similar topology (e.g.  $B \rightarrow D(K\pi\pi)\pi$ ,  $B \rightarrow D(K\pi\pi)\rho$ ). We develop PDFs for the combinatorial background with fits to the data from which the signal region ( $5.27 \text{ GeV} < m_{\text{ES}} < 5.29 \text{ GeV}$  and  $|\Delta E| < 75 \text{ MeV}$ ) has been excluded.

The functions  $\mathcal{P}_j$  are constructed as linear combinations of Gaussian and polynomial functions, or in the case of  $m_{\text{ES}}$  for  $q\bar{q}$  background, the threshold function  $x\sqrt{1-x^2} \exp[-\xi(1-x^2)]$ , with argument  $x \equiv 2m_{\text{ES}}/\sqrt{s}$  and shape parameter  $\xi$ . These functions are discussed in more detail in [14], and are illustrated in Figs. 1 and 2.

We allow the parameters most important for the determination of the combinatorial background PDFs to vary in the fit, along with the yields for all components, and the signal and  $q\bar{q}$  background asymmetries. Specifically, the free background parameters are:  $\xi$  for  $m_{\text{ES}}$ , linear and quadratic coefficients for  $\Delta E$ , and the mean, width, width difference, and polynomial fraction parameters for  $\mathcal{F}$ .

We validate the fitting procedure by applying it to ensembles of simulated experiments with the  $q\bar{q}$  component drawn from the PDF, into which we have embedded known numbers of signal and  $B\bar{B}$  background events randomly extracted from the fully simulated MC samples. By tuning the number of embedded events until the fit reproduces the yields found in the data, we determine the biases that are reported, along with the signal yields, in Table I.

In Figs. 1 and 2 we show the projections of the PDF and data for each fit. The data plotted are subsamples enriched in signal with the requirement of a minimum value of the ratio of signal to total likelihood (computed without the plotted variable) that retains (30–50)% of the signal, depending on the mode.

TABLE I: Number of events  $N$  in the sample, fitted signal yield  $Y_S$ , and measured bias (to be subtracted from  $Y_S$ ) in events (ev.), detection efficiency times secondary decay branching fractions  $\epsilon$ , significance  $\mathcal{S}$  (with systematic uncertainties included), and branching fraction and charge asymmetry with statistical and systematic error.

Mode	$N$ (ev.)	$Y_S$ (ev.)	Bias (ev.)	$\epsilon$ (%)	$\mathcal{S}$ ( $\sigma$ )	$\mathcal{B}$ ( $10^{-6}$ )	$\mathcal{A}_{ch}$
$b_1^+ K^0$	9841	$164^{+27}_{-25}$	$15 \pm 7$	3.4	6.3	$9.6 \pm 1.7 \pm 0.9$	$-0.03 \pm 0.15 \pm 0.02$
$b_1^0 K^0$	5420	$58^{+19}_{-17}$	$5 \pm 3$	2.2	3.4	$5.1 \pm 1.8 \pm 0.5$ ( $< 7.8$ )	
$b_1^+ \pi^0$	28787	$71^{+35}_{-32}$	$8 \pm 4$	7.7	1.6	$1.8 \pm 0.9 \pm 0.2$ ( $< 3.3$ )	
$b_1^0 \pi^0$	10554	$6^{+19}_{-16}$	$-2 \pm 2$	4.8	0.5	$0.4 \pm 0.8 \pm 0.2$ ( $< 1.9$ )	

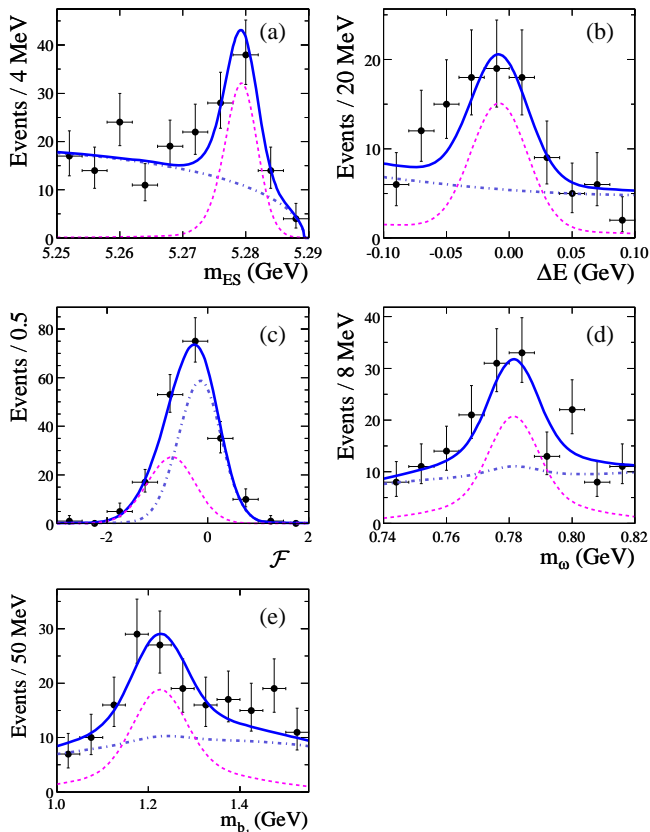


FIG. 1: Distributions for signal-enhanced subsets (see text) of the data projected onto the fit observables for the decay  $B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0$ ; (a)  $m_{ES}$ , (b)  $\Delta E$ , (c)  $\mathcal{F}$ , (d)  $m(\pi^+\pi^-\pi^0)$  for the  $\omega$  candidate, and (e)  $m(\omega\pi)$  for the  $b_1$  candidate. The solid lines represent the results of the fits, and the dashed and dot-dashed lines the signal and background contributions respectively.

We compute the branching fraction by subtracting the fit bias from the measured yield, and dividing the result by the number of produced  $B\bar{B}$  pairs and by the efficiency times  $\mathcal{B}(\omega \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-\pi^0) = 89.1 \pm 0.7\%$  (and for the modes with  $K_s^0$ ,  $\mathcal{B}(K^0 \rightarrow K_s^0 \rightarrow \pi^+\pi^-) = \frac{1}{2}(69.20 \pm 0.05)\%$ ) [5]. The efficiency is obtained from the MC signal model. We assume that the branching fractions of the  $\Upsilon(4S)$  to  $B^+B^-$  and  $B^0\bar{B}^0$  are each equal to 0.5, consistent with

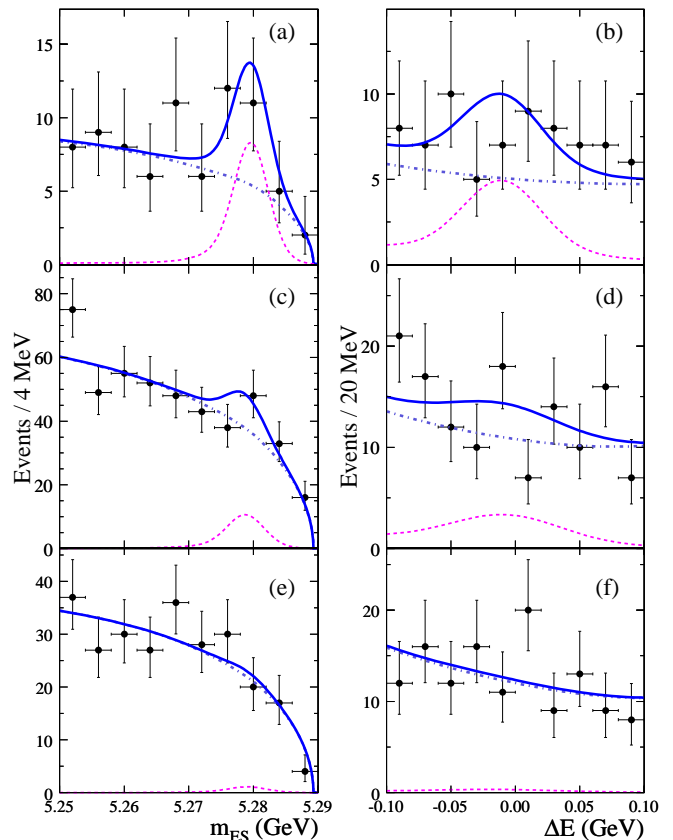


FIG. 2: Distributions for signal-enhanced subsets (see text) of the data projected onto  $m_{ES}$  (a, c, e) and  $\Delta E$  (b, d, f) for the decays  $B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 K^0$  (a, b),  $B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ \pi^0$  (c, d), and  $B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 \pi^0$  (e, f). The solid lines represent the results of the fits, and the dashed and dot-dashed lines the signal and background contributions respectively.

measurements [5]. The results are given in Table I, along with the significance, computed as the square root of the difference between the value of  $-2 \ln \mathcal{L}$  (with additive systematic uncertainties included) for zero signal and the value at its minimum.

Systematic uncertainties on the branching fractions arise from the PDFs,  $B\bar{B}$  backgrounds, fit bias, and efficiency. PDF uncertainties not already accounted for by free parameters in the fit are estimated from the consis-

tency of fits to MC and data in control modes. Varying the signal-PDF parameters within these errors, we estimate yield uncertainties of (1.6–6.4)%, depending on the mode. We estimate the uncertainty of the MC model of misreconstructed signal by performing alternate fits with a signal PDF determined from true signal events only; we find differences of 1–4 events between these and the nominal fits. The uncertainty from fit bias (Table I) includes its statistical uncertainty from the simulated experiments, and half of the correction itself, added in quadrature. For the  $B\bar{B}$  backgrounds we vary the fixed fit component by 100% and include in quadrature a term derived from MC studies of the inclusion of a  $b \rightarrow c$  component with the dominant  $q\bar{q}$  background. Uncertainties in our knowledge of the efficiency include  $0.5\% \times N_t$  and  $1.5\% \times N_\gamma$ , where  $N_t$  and  $N_\gamma$  are the numbers of tracks and photons, respectively, in the  $B$  candidate. The uncertainties in the efficiency from the event selection are below 0.5%.

We study asymmetries from the track reconstruction (found to be negligible), and from imperfect modeling of the interactions with material in the detector, by measuring the asymmetries in the  $q\bar{q}$  background in the data and control samples mentioned previously, in comparison with MC [15]. We assign a systematic error for  $\mathcal{A}_{ch}$  equal to 0.01.

With the assumption that  $\mathcal{B}(b_1 \rightarrow \omega\pi) = 1$ , we obtain for the branching fractions (in units of  $10^{-6}$ ):

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0) &= 9.6 \pm 1.7 \pm 0.9 \\ \mathcal{B}(B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 K^0) &= 5.1 \pm 1.8 \pm 0.5 (< 7.8) \\ \mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ \pi^0) &= 1.8 \pm 0.9 \pm 0.2 (< 3.3) \\ \mathcal{B}(B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 \pi^0) &= 0.4 \pm 0.8 \pm 0.2 (< 1.9).\end{aligned}$$

The first error quoted is statistical and the second systematic. We find no evidence for the modes with  $\pi^0$ ; the evidence for  $\mathcal{B}(B^0 \rightarrow b_1^0 K^0)$  has a significance of 3.4 standard deviations. For these modes we quote also 90% confidence level upper limits, given in parentheses. We observe the decay  $\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0)$ , and measure the charge asymmetry

$$\mathcal{A}_{ch}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0) = -0.03 \pm 0.15 \pm 0.02.$$

The QCD factorization estimates [9] for the branching fractions and charge asymmetry (0.014) agree with these measurements within experimental and theoretical errors. We find no evidence for direct  $CP$  violation in  $\mathcal{B}(B^+ \rightarrow b_1^+ K^0)$ .

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\* Deceased

† Now at Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122, USA

‡ Now at Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 69978, Israel

§ Also with Università di Perugia, Dipartimento di Fisica, Perugia, Italy

¶ Also with Università di Roma La Sapienza, I-00185 Roma, Italy

\*\* Now at University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama 36688, USA

†† Also with Università di Sassari, Sassari, Italy

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