

Stabilizing Tokamak Plasmas with ML-based Feedback Control

A. Rothstein¹,

J. Abbate², J. Seo³, H. Farre²,
I. Char⁴, R. Shousha², A. Jalalvand¹,
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¹ Princeton University

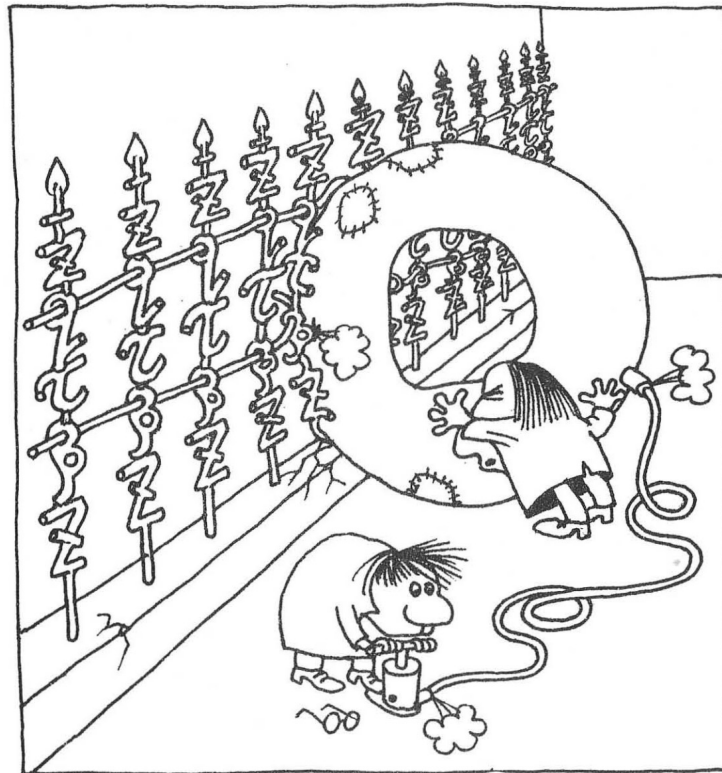
² Princeton Plasma Physics Lab

³ Chung-Ang University

⁴ Carnegie Mellon University



**Mechanical &
Aerospace
Engineering**



Cartoon:
EPS 1981

Next Shot **187065** ReferenceShot
 Ip Request 1.00 MA
 Bt Request 1.99 T
 Shot Setup Time **01:28**
 Time Since Last Power Shot **0:21:47**
 Ready to Start
 Beams PCS Data Acq
 Ready to Fire
 Beams ECH Cryo MPRB
 Requested for Shot
 N/A N/A

One Minute to Countdown

First Fault	None		B Cooldown	00:00	F Cooldown	00:00	Glow Left	00:00	PCS Status	In Lockout	Pit Run	CLEAR
EPS Settings						BPS Settings						
Reverse	105.0 KA	Forward	130.0 KA	+	118.0 KA	1.99 Tesla	IB Control From Ops					
Off	6.504 s	EBTime	0.840 s	Flattop	-0.155 s	Off	5.226 s	Cool Down	9.940 m			
ECH Valve/Ready Status												
Gyro Load	Tin Man	Leia	Luke	Vader	Nasa	R2D2	Density Limit					
	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	Local	5.6*10 ¹³ cm ³					
Neutral Beams												
Voltage (KV)	30L	30R	150L	150R	210L	210R	330L	330R	Vessel Pressure	150 Beamline		
	81.0	75.0	62.0	62.1	70.0	75.7	72.0	76.0	8.8862e-08 Torr	Tilt	Left	Right
TIV	Open		Open		Open		Open		16.08 degree	-0.02 ' Arcminutes		



Improving plasmas by trial-and-error

- “[after a previous full-day experiment we were] able to reproduce 133103 in 180636, 180643 and 180644.
- Many shots had MHD modes at 3 s... to try to improve that we changed **Electron Cyclotron Heating** deposition (180639-180642), and go to lower (180643-180646) and higher (180647) **plasma current**... none of which were successful.
- We also **tried lowering the voltage on the off-axis beams** (180645) to get rid of the bursty modes and **moving the BetaN ramp earlier** (180646.)”
- Ultimately, got “good reproduction of 133103, but no significant improvement”

Human operators combine simulations, heuristics, and experience to achieve desired state by trial-and-error



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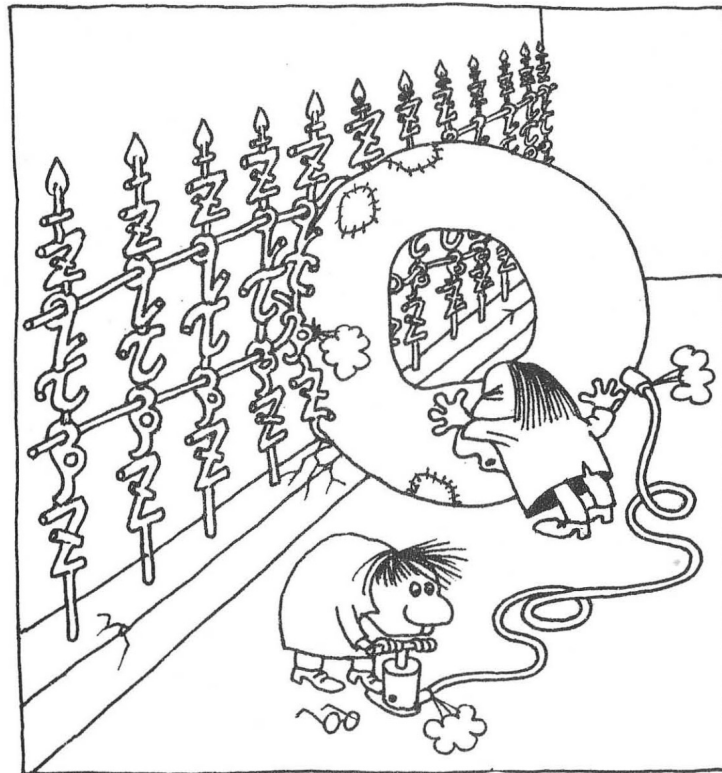
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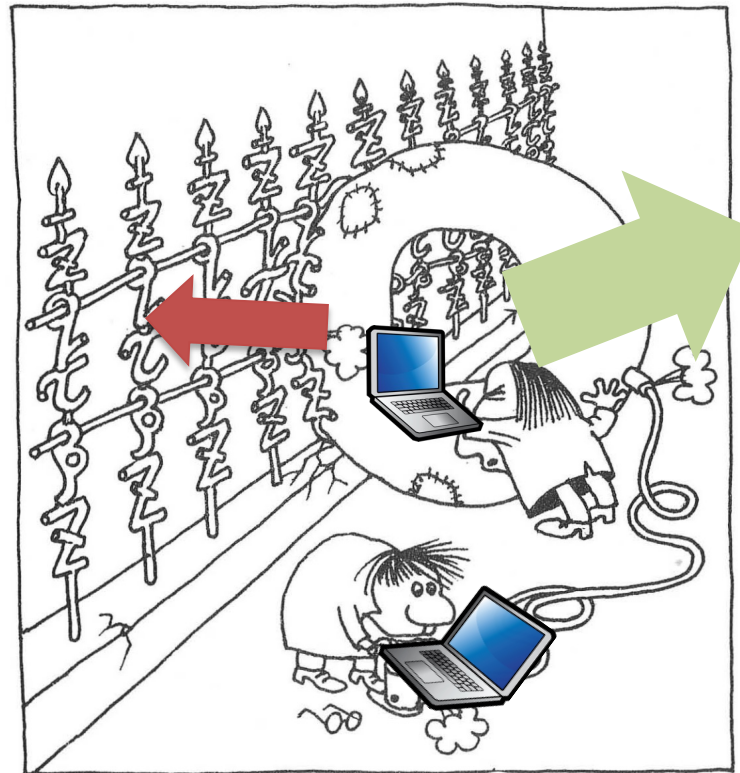
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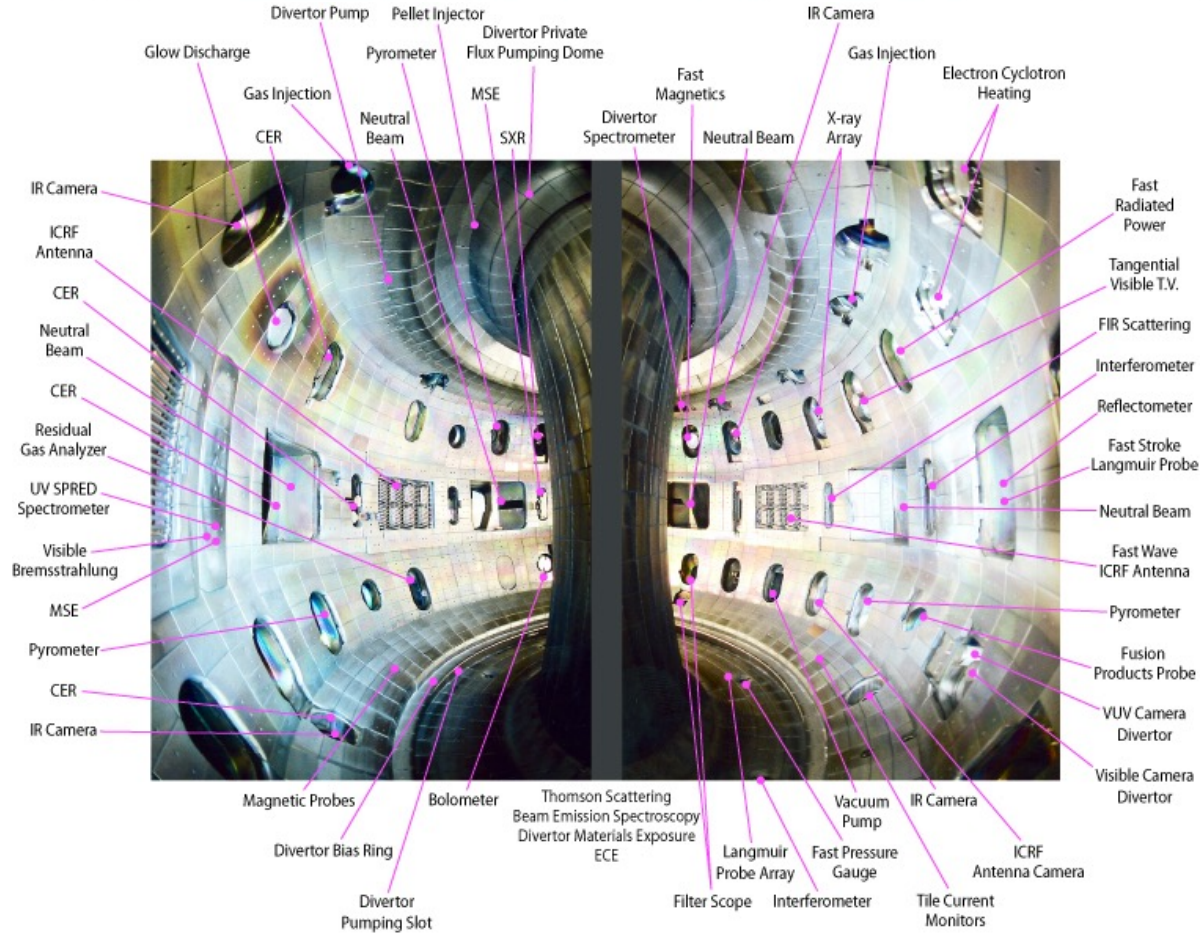
Background

TM Control

Profile Prediction

Crash Course to Tokamak Experiments

Observing the plasma state



Reconstructing the plasma state

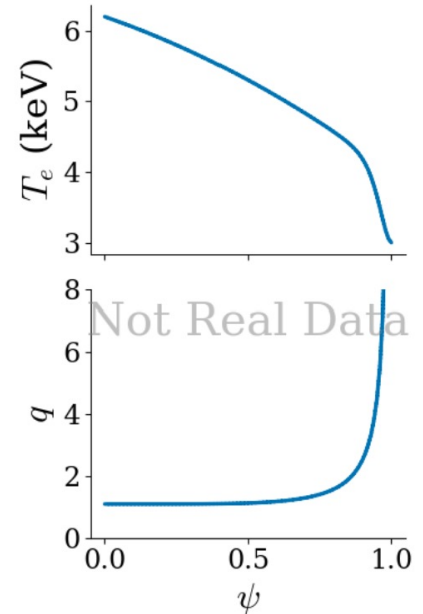
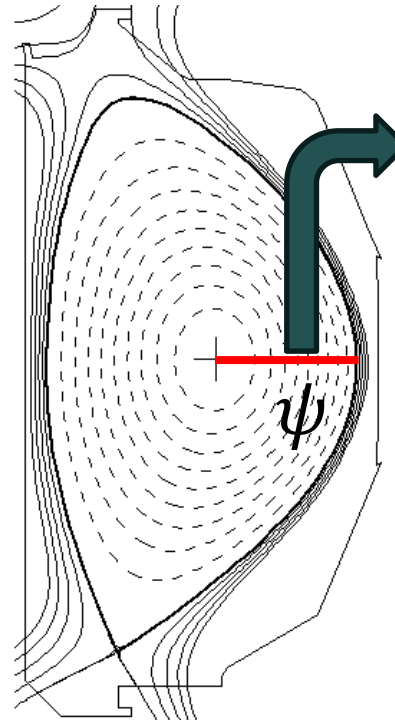
- Use diagnostic data to reconstruct plasma equilibrium

Scalar Parameters

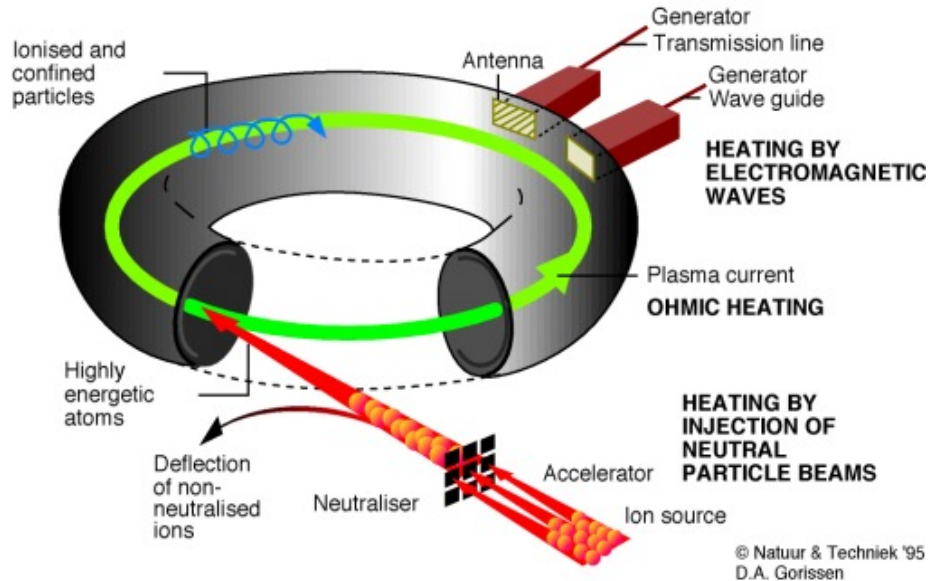
- Plasma shape and boundary ($\kappa, \delta_{u,l}$ etc)
- Normalized pressure (β_N)
- Plasma current (I_P)
- Magnetic field (B_T)

1D Profiles

- Pressure (P)
- Safety factor (q)
- Electron temperature and density (T_e, n_e)
- Ion temperature and density (T_i, n_i)
- Rotation (Ω)



Actuators that affect plasma state



Heating Sources

- Neutral Beams
- Electron Cyclotron Heating
- Other RF Waves (Helicon + Lower Hybrid)

Magnetic Coils

- Central solenoid ramp rate
- Toroidal field coils
- Poloidal field coils
- 3D field coils to perturb toroidal symmetry

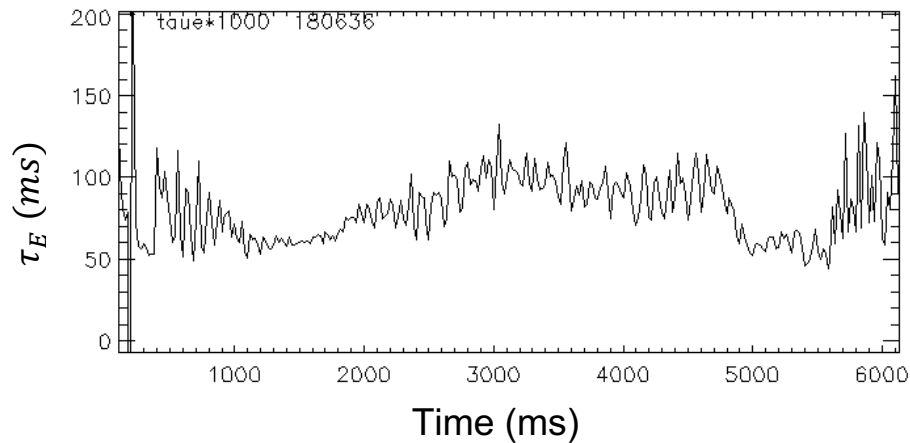
Gases

- Gas valves
- Pellet injection

Experimental Timescales

Profile Evolution

- τ_E : 50-100ms
- τ_R : ≈ 1 s



Instabilities

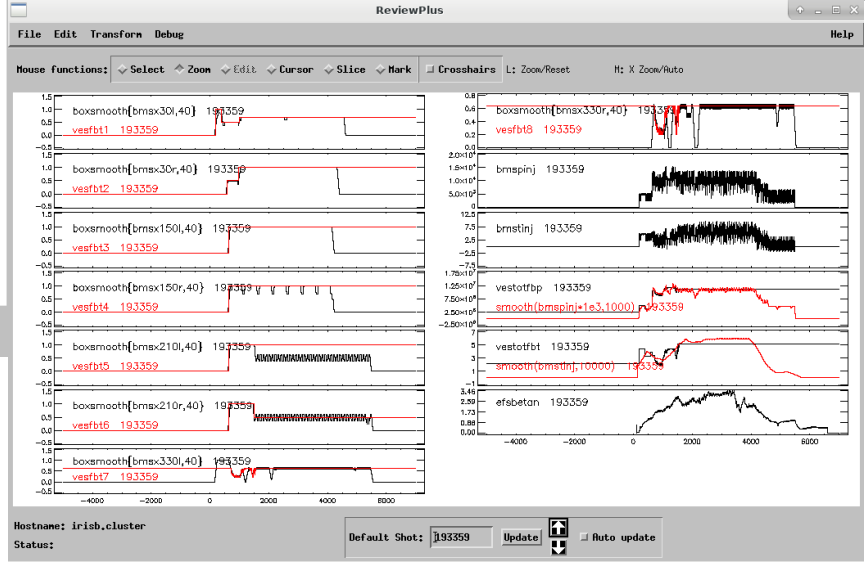
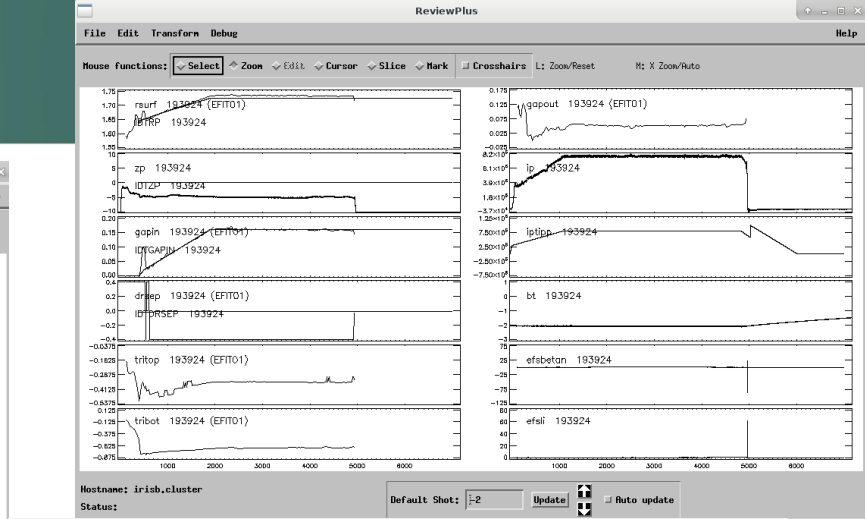
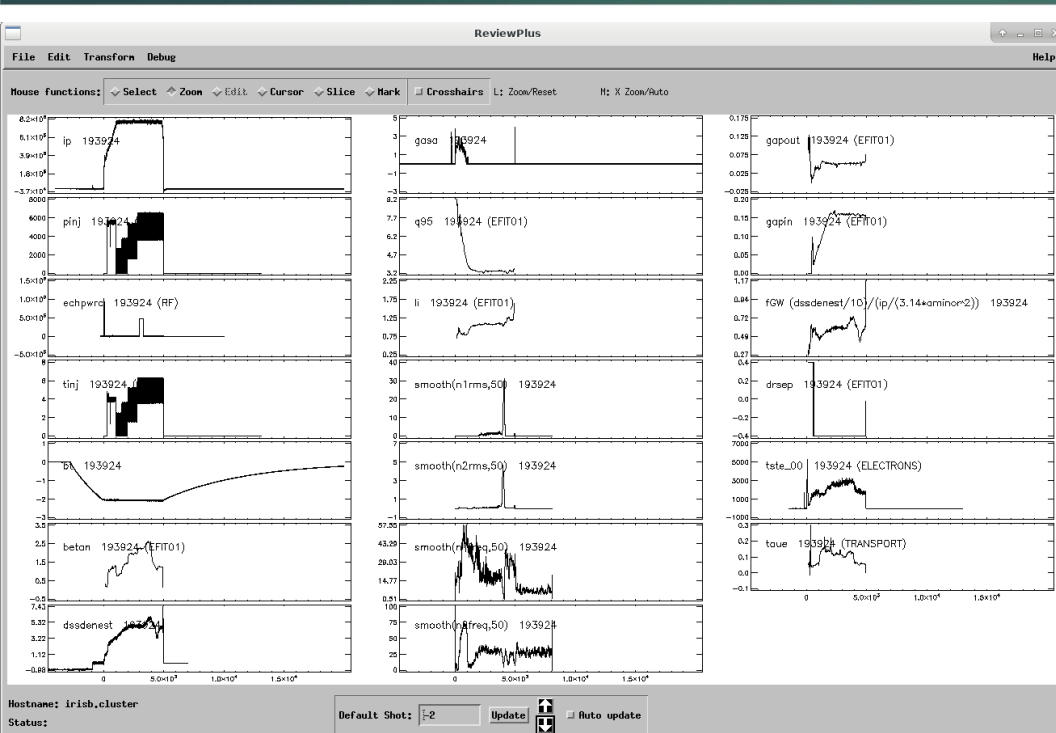
- Tearing Modes: 1-10ms
- VDEs: μ s scale
- Disruptions: ≈ 1 ms

Real-time control system

- Shape control: <1 ms
- NBI heating: 50ms
- ECH heating: 50ms
- ML models: 1-10ms
- Magnetic diagnostics: <1 ms
- Profile diagnostics: ≈ 20 ms

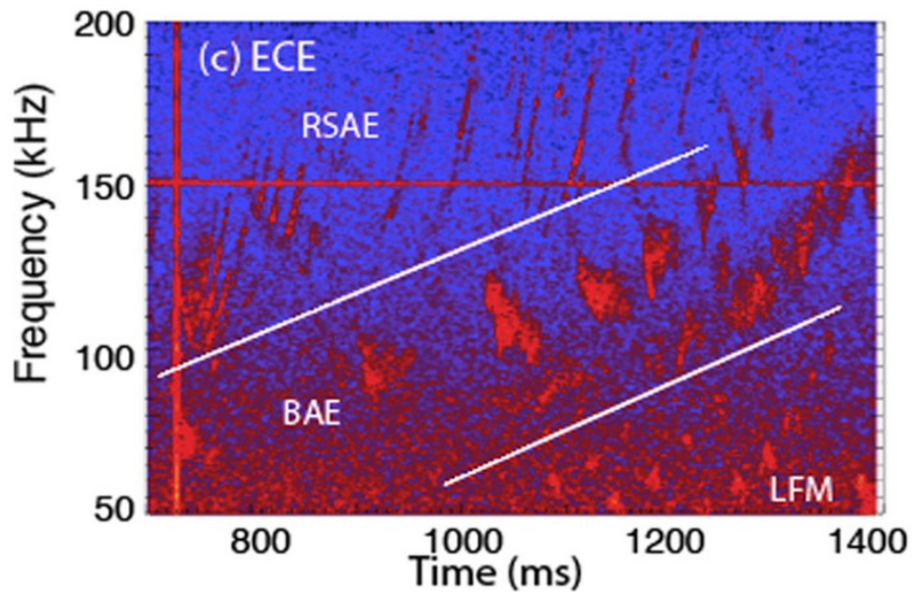
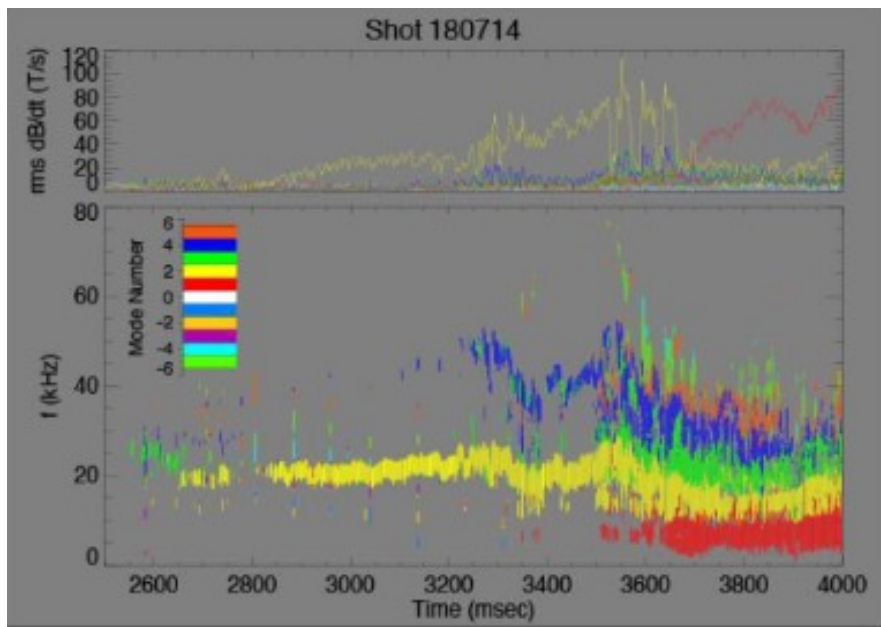
Why machine learning?

- Lots of data



Why machine learning?

- Lots of data
- Models can be run real-time (ms time-scale)
- ML can find patterns to predict instabilities



Why machine learning?

- Lots of data
- Models can be run real-time (ms time-scale)
- ML can find patterns to predict instabilities
- Physics models use artificial actuators

- Minimal experimental time to test my modes and policies
- Shots not reproducible
- Non-linearities also make learning challenging

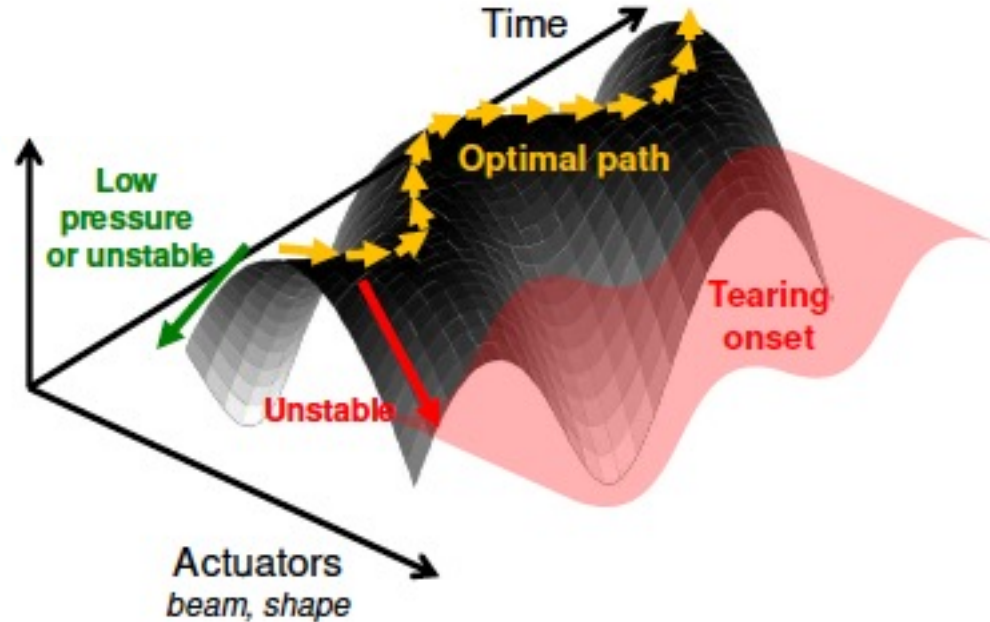
What should a good ML controller do?

What ML is not good for:

- Developing new scenarios
- Extrapolating to new regimes

What ML is good for:

- Maintaining stability in previously explored spaces
- Recovering from small deviations to optimized scenario



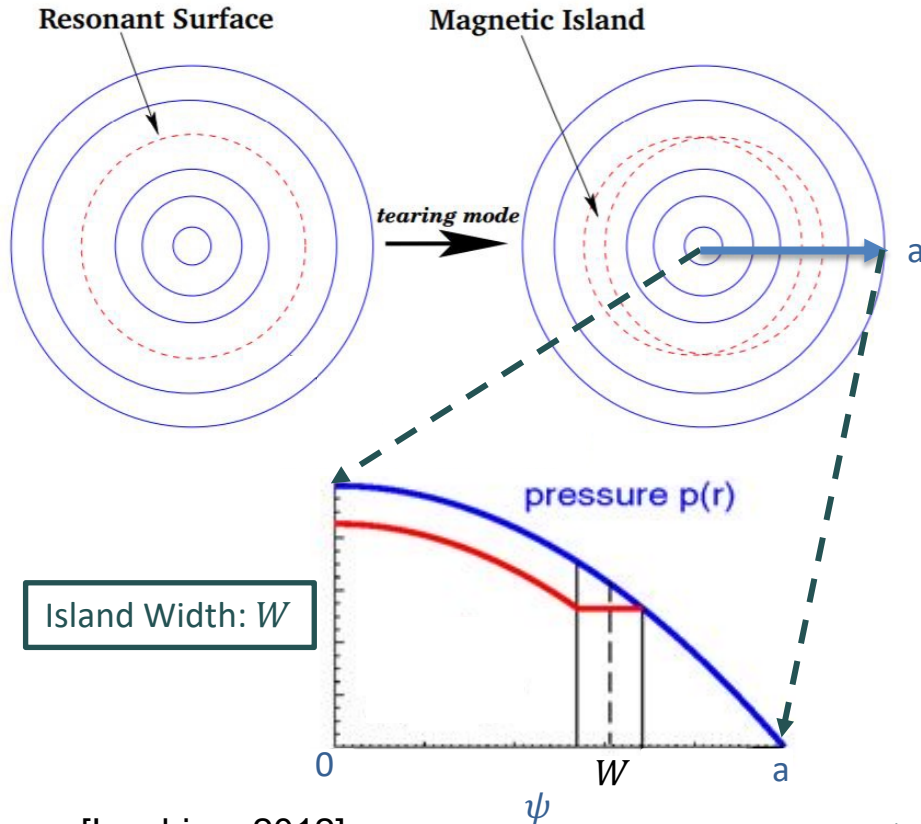
Background

TM Control

Profile Prediction

Tearing Mode Prediction and Control

What are tearing modes?

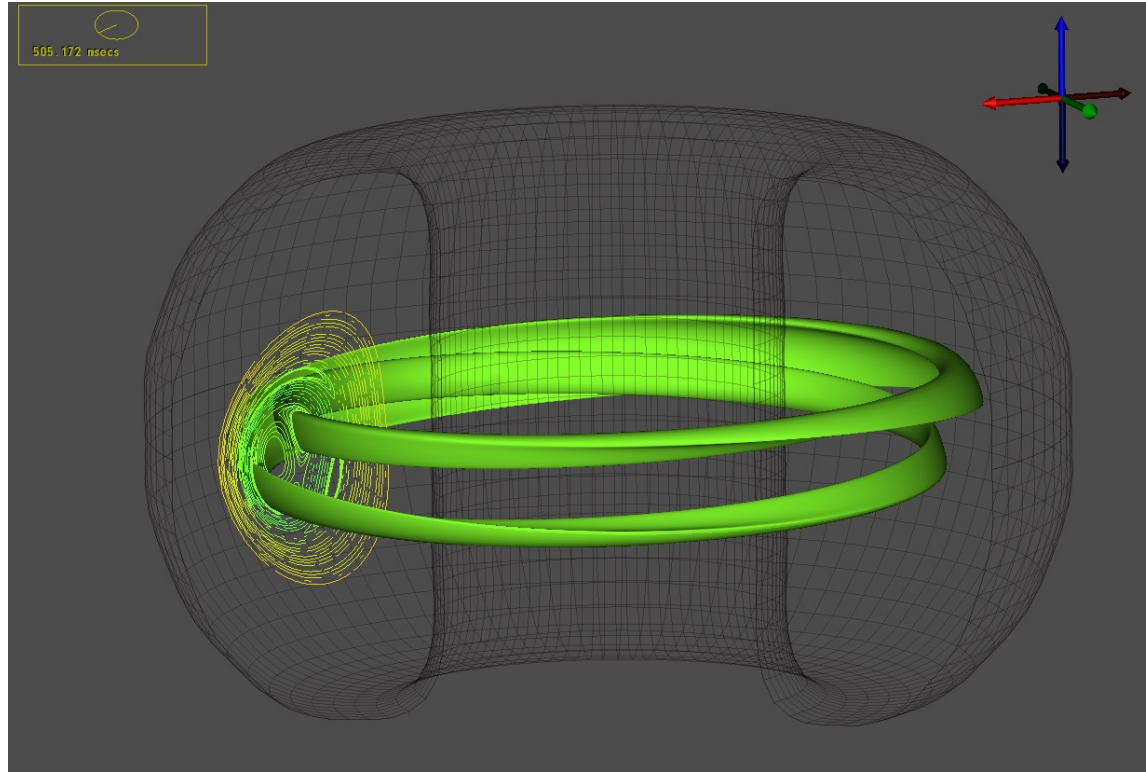


- Magnetic field reconfigures to lowest energy
- Occurs at rational surfaces
- Breaks nicely nested flux surfaces

So why do we care?

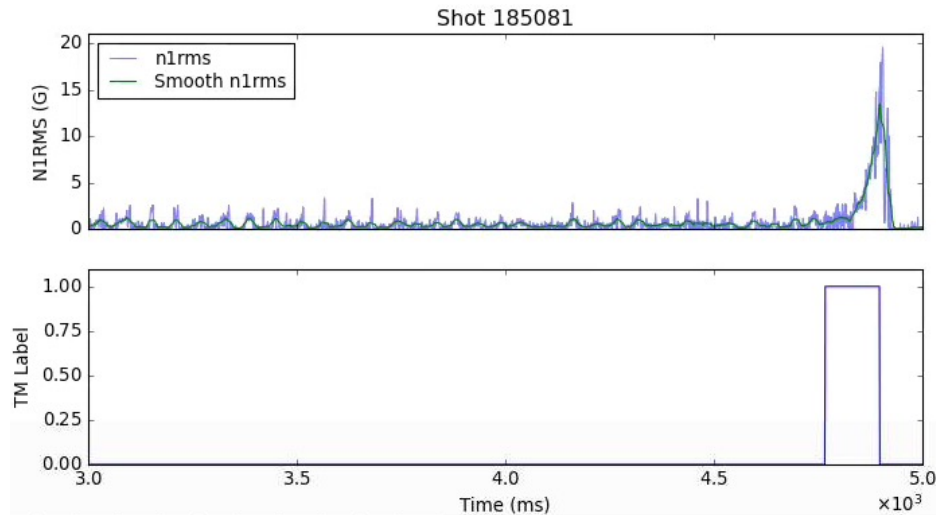
- “Short circuits” transport
- Modes can lock to wall \rightarrow disrupts plasma

Tearing Modes are 3D Structures



Tearing Mode Database

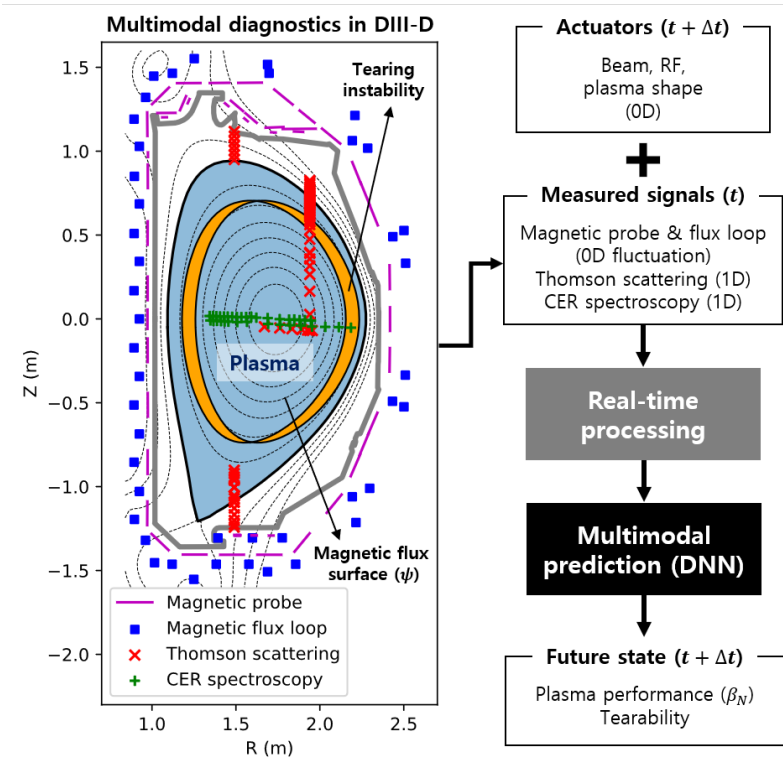
- Conditions for TM label:
 - $n1rms > 12G$
 - Duration of TM $> 50ms$
 - $H_{98} > 0.7$
 - q_{95} at TM onset $< 1.5 * \min(q_{95})$
- Includes 8,505 shots from 2011-2022 campaigns with 639,555 time slices
 - $\approx 8\%$ of time slices have TMs



Tearing Mode Predictor

- Uses current time-step profiles + future actuators:
 - This models: “What can a controller do?”
- $\Delta t = 25\text{ms}$ chosen to capture profile variation

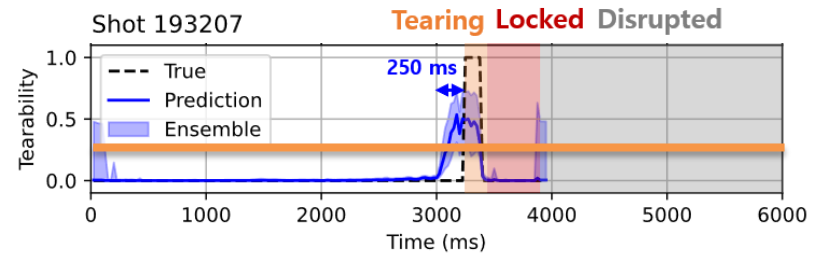
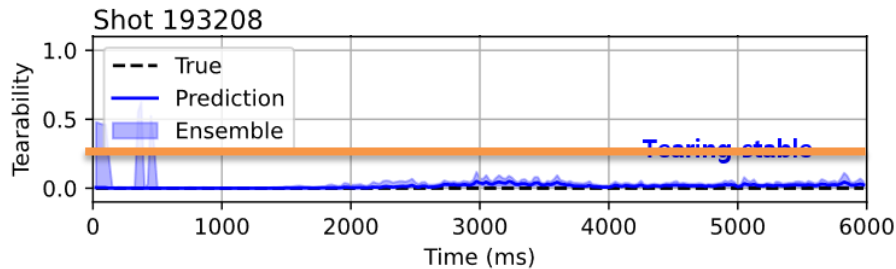
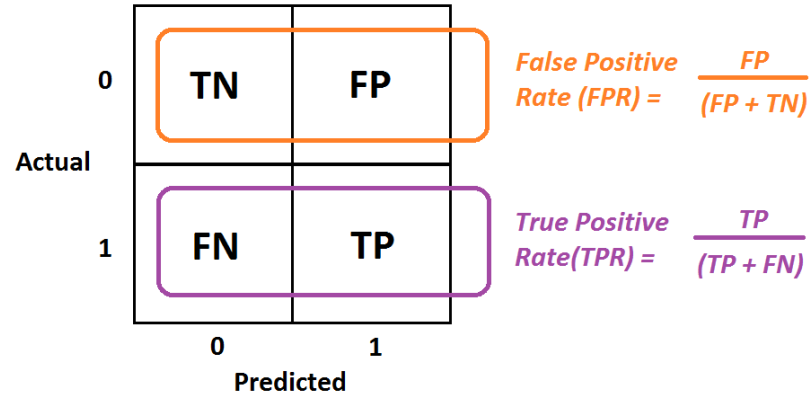
Profiles at $T = t$	Actuators at $T = t + \Delta t$	Outputs $T = t + \Delta t$
rtEFIT: q, p Thomson: n_e, T_e CER: v_{tor}	rtEFIT: $B_T, I_p, R_0, \kappa,$ $\delta_w, \delta_l, gap_{in}$ $P_{NBI}, T_{NBI}, P_{ECH}$	Tearability β_N



Now stir the pile, but how should we evaluate models?

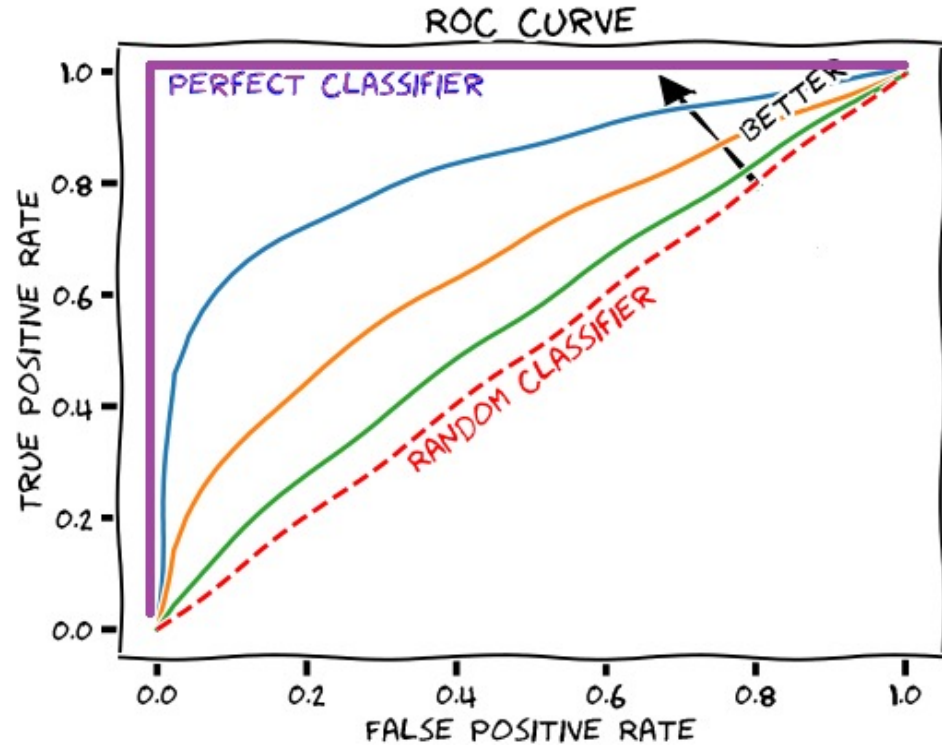


Assessing Event Prediction Models



AUC Metric

- AUC metric integrates TPR by sweeping threshold from $1 \rightarrow 0$
 - FPR sweeps from $0 \rightarrow 1$
- AUC values:
 - Perfect classifier = 1
 - Random classifier = 0.5

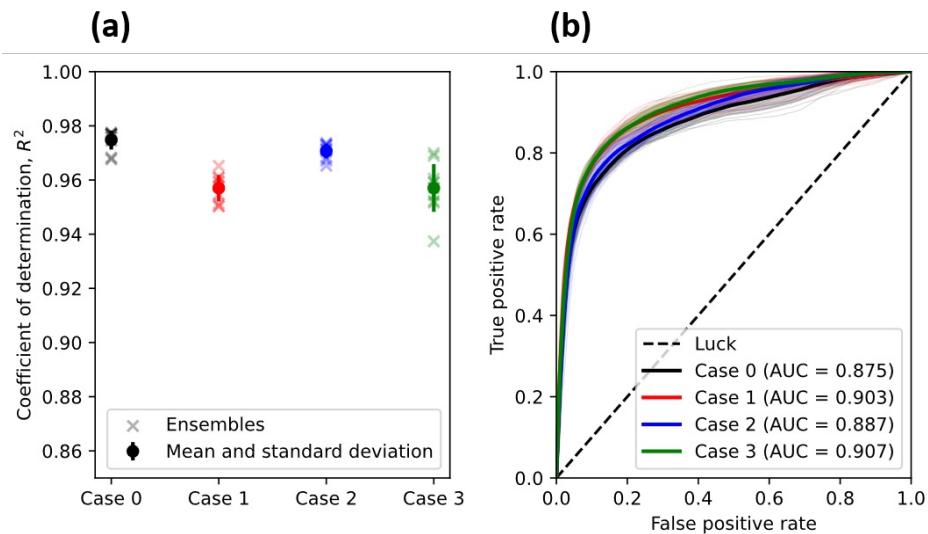


TM Model Selection

TABLE II

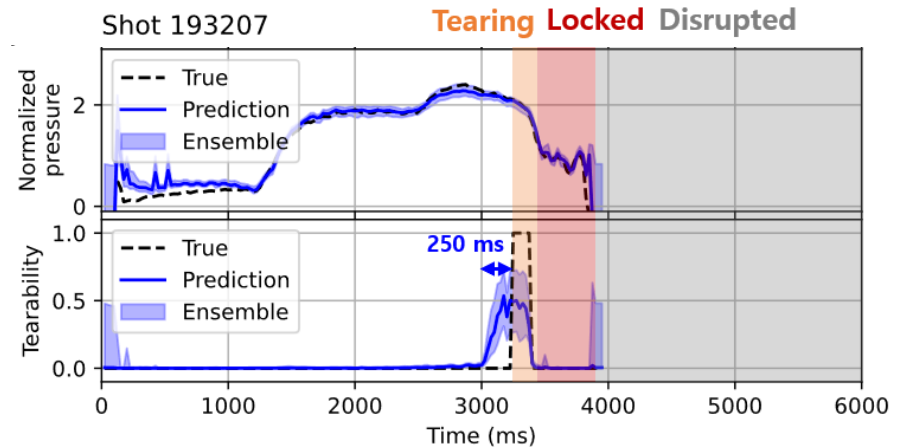
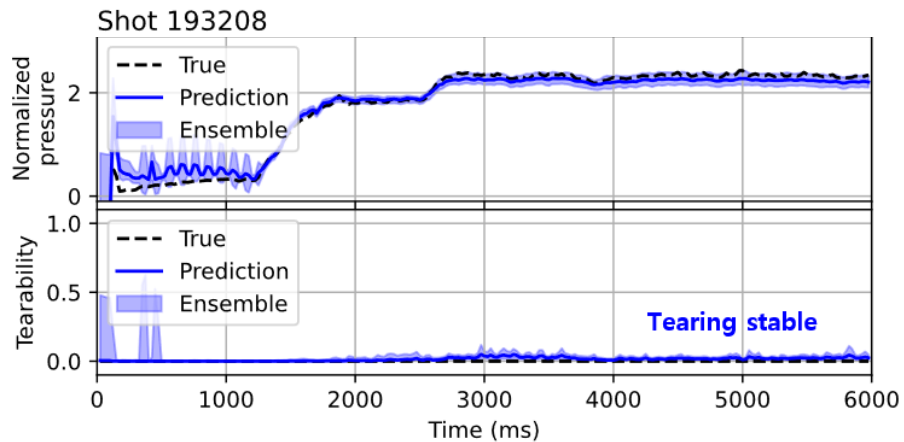
THE INFLUENCE OF THE TYPE OF LOSS FUNCTION AND OVERSAMPLING

Case number	Loss for β_N	Loss for tearability	Over-sampling	R^2 for β_N	AUC for tearability
0	MSE	MSE	No	0.975	0.875
1	MSE	MSE	Yes	0.957	0.903
2	MSE	BCE	No	0.971	0.887
3	MSE	BCE	Yes	0.957	0.907



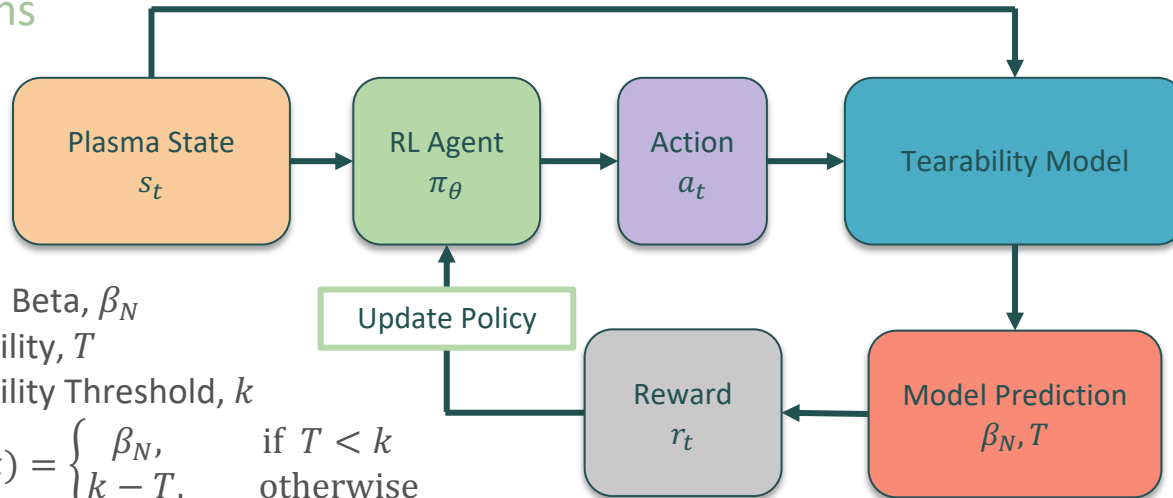
TM Predictor Results

- Ensemble of 10 models gives uncertainty estimate



RL Training Loop

1. Random, real experimental data, s_t , selected from database
2. RL Agent observes plasma and decided on action to take, a_t
3. Plasma state and RL agent's actions are fed to Tearability model
4. Tearability Model predicts Tearability (T) and β_N
5. Using reward function, the RL agent updates its policy to perform better in future iterations

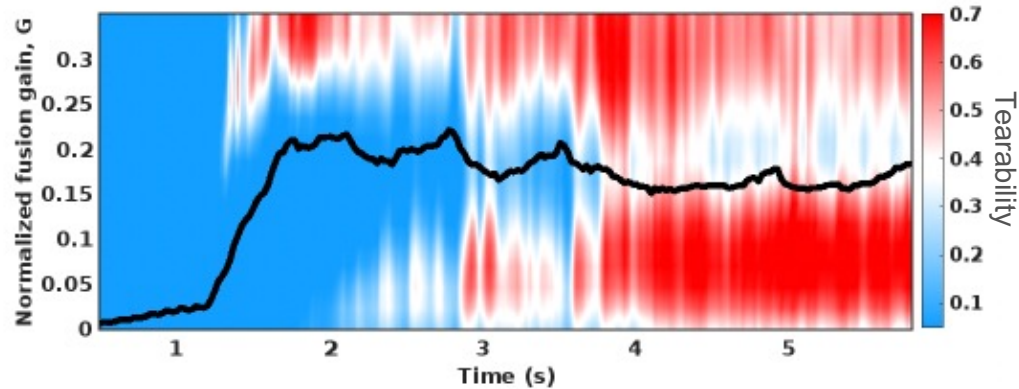


- Plasma Beta, β_N
- Tearability, T
- Tearability Threshold, k

$$r_t(\beta_N, T; k) = \begin{cases} \beta_N, & \text{if } T < k \\ k - T, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Why is RL control worth exploring?

- Fusion Gain: $G \propto \beta_N / q_{95}^2$
- RL feedback control can “thread the needle” to do better than other controllers



Summary of TM and instability control

- Build a model that identifies and predicts instabilities:
 - Other instabilities: VDEs, AEs, ELMs, Density limits, etc
- If we understand how to control: can do direct control based on event predictions
 - Example: predict disruptions → safe ramp down
- If we don't understand how to control: RL is a possible option that can learn solutions based on experimental data
 - RL controller can turn multiple actuators to find solutions classical control cannot
 - Improvements to instability predictor → improvements to RL agent

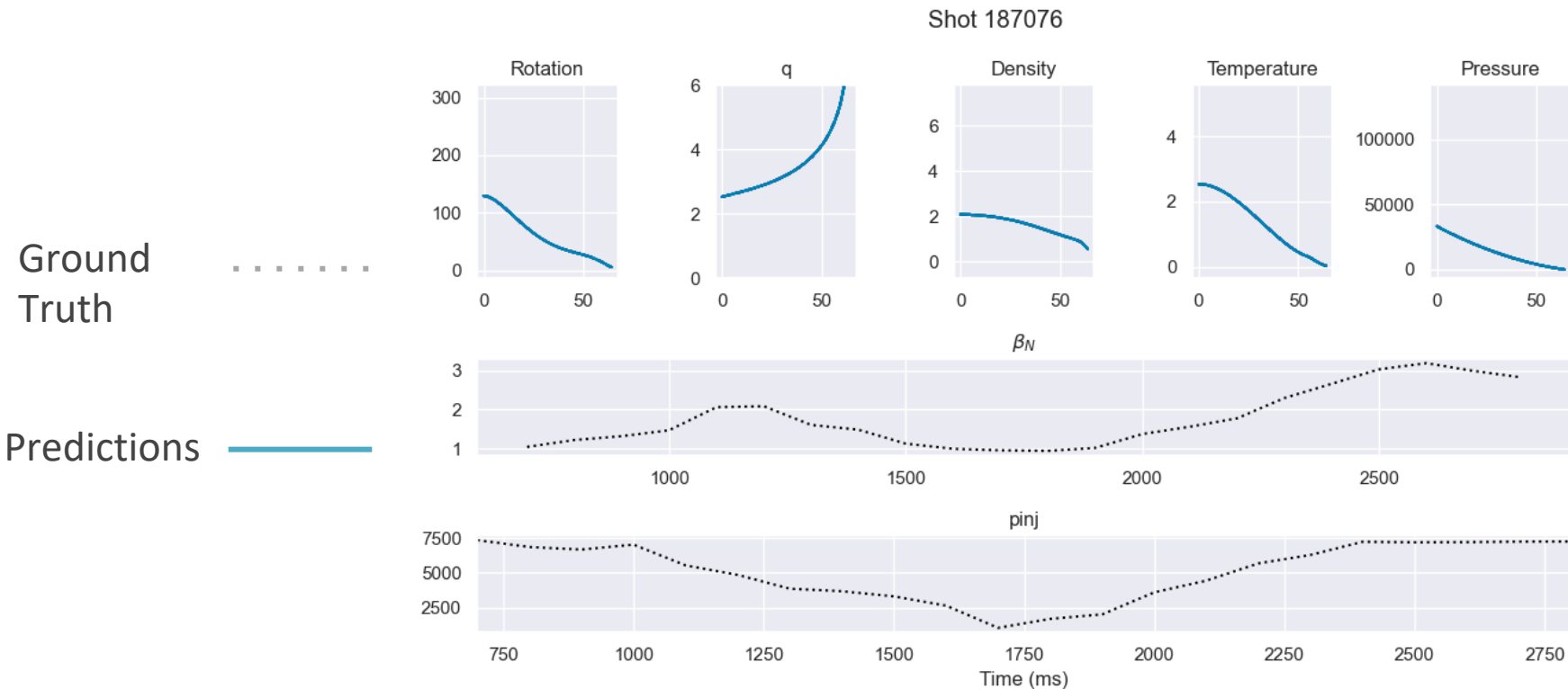
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TM Control

Profile Prediction

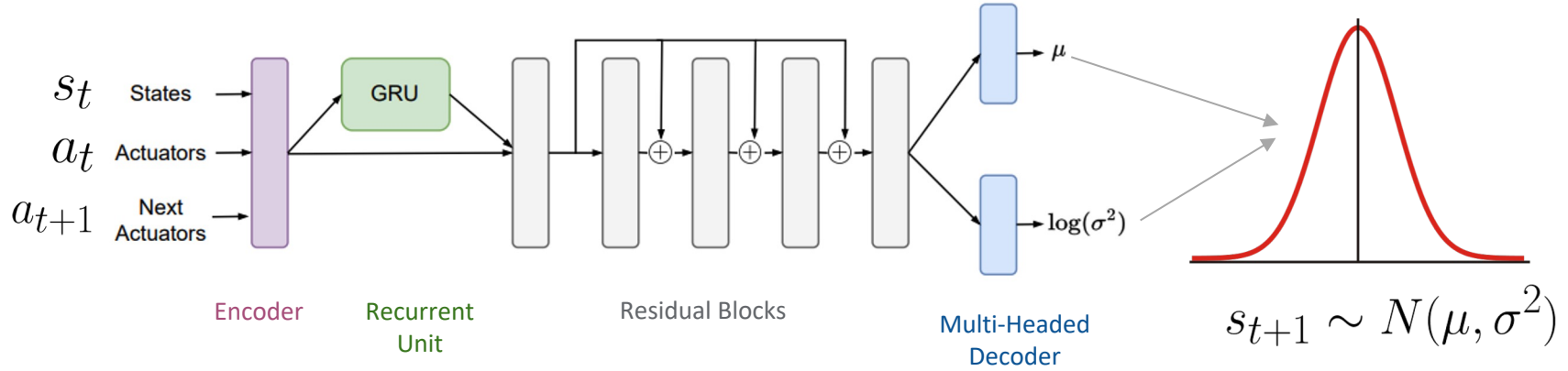
Full Shot Profile Prediction and Control

Predict full shots with actuator trajectories



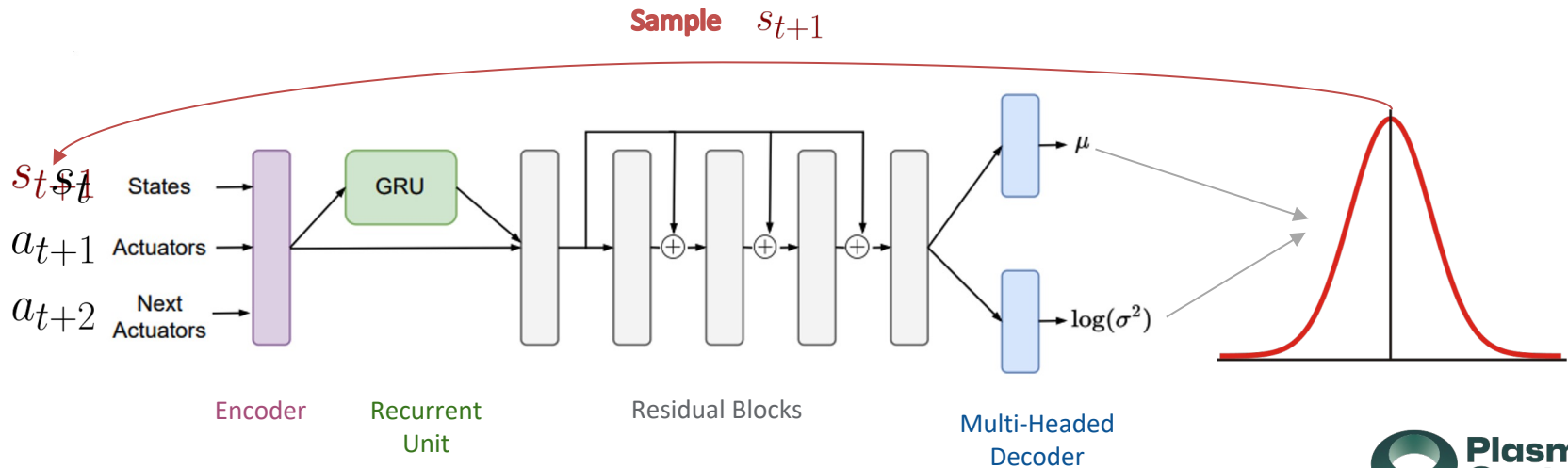
Model Architecture

- Predictions are made 25ms into future
- Model predicts a Gaussian distribution of the next state



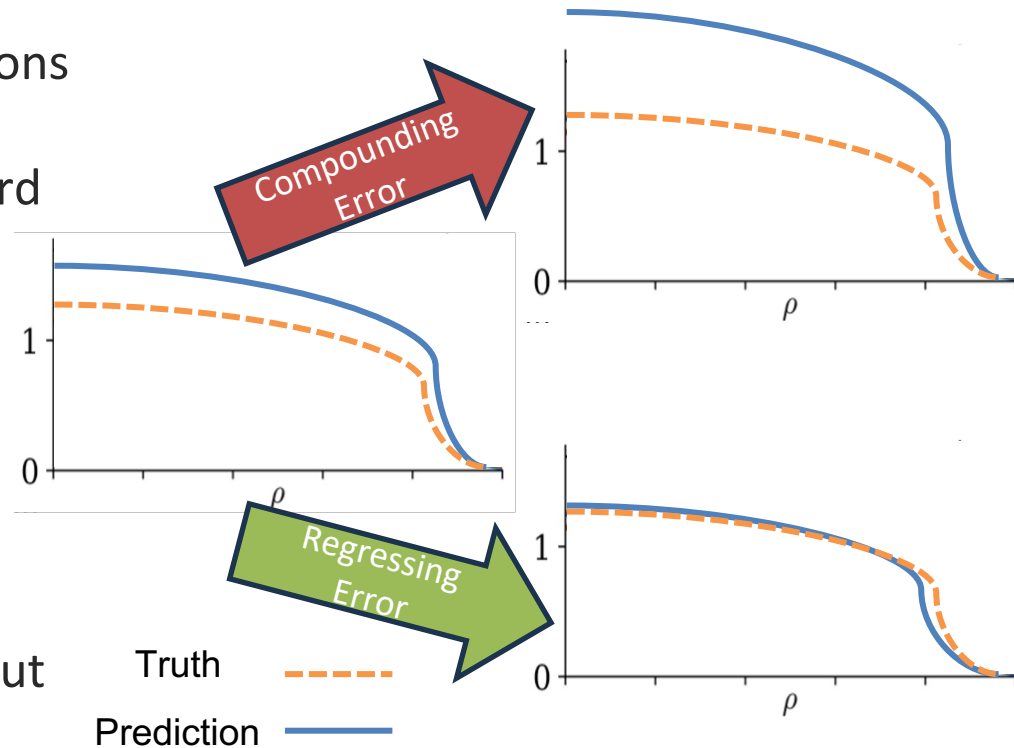
Predicting Full Shots

- Next state sampled from Gaussian and fed back into model
- Actuators can be taken from historical data (“replaying a shot”) or provided by some optimization algorithm



How to keep long-term predictions stable

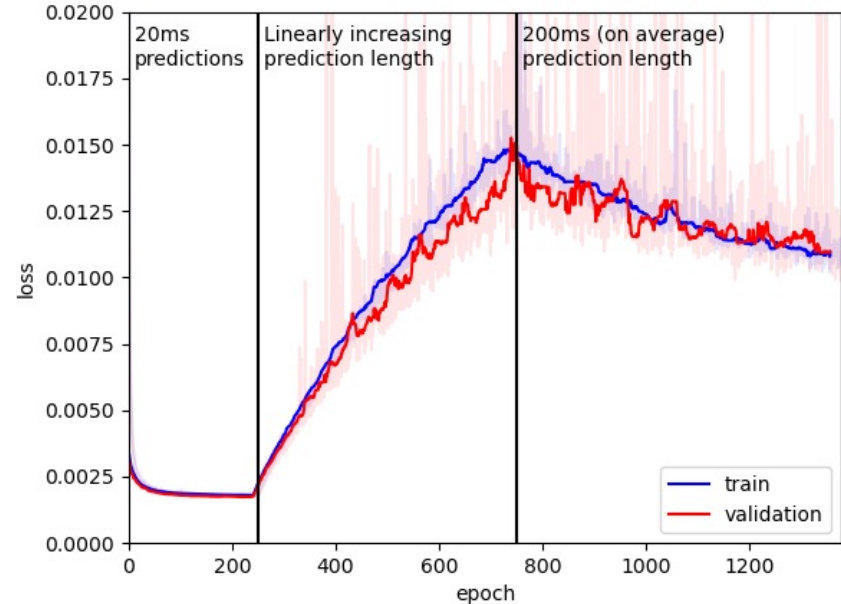
- Predicting off previous predictions causes errors to compound
- Need to have "regression toward the mean"
- Solution 1: Uncertainty predictions
 - Predict (μ, σ)
- Solution 2: model ensembling
 - Multiple models = further averaging
- Solution 3: autoregressive rollout



Curriculum Learning

- Start by having model predict $\mu = 1$ time steps into future
 - Use time t to predict $t + 1$
- Ramp prediction horizon from $\mu = 1$ to $\mu = 10$
- Continue training at $\mu = 10$

Training + Validation Loss



Model Predictive Control

$$\mathbf{x}_{t+1} = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{x}_t + \mathbf{B}\mathbf{u}_t$$

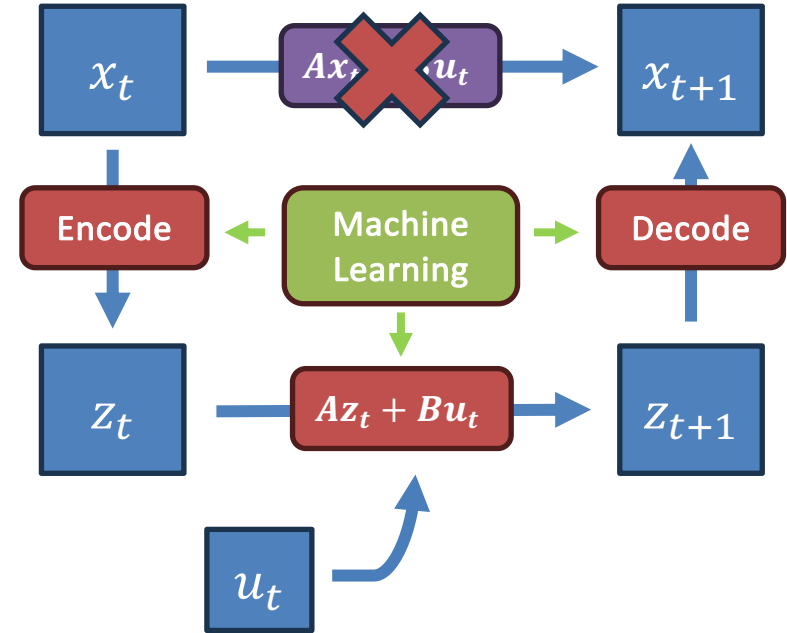
Predicted state \mathbf{x}_{t+1} is determined by the current state \mathbf{x}_t and the control actuators \mathbf{u}_t .

$$\text{Cost} = \sum_t \underbrace{(\mathbf{x}_{target} - \mathbf{x}_t)^T \mathbf{Q} (\mathbf{x}_{target} - \mathbf{x}_t)}_{\text{Tracking Error}} + \underbrace{\mathbf{u}_t^T \mathbf{R} \mathbf{u}_t}_{\text{Control Effort}}$$

- MPC efficiently finds the optimal (cheapest) actuator trajectory to reach a desired state
- Requires linearized dynamics model of the plasma, but we know plasmas are strongly nonlinear!
- How can we control in real-time?

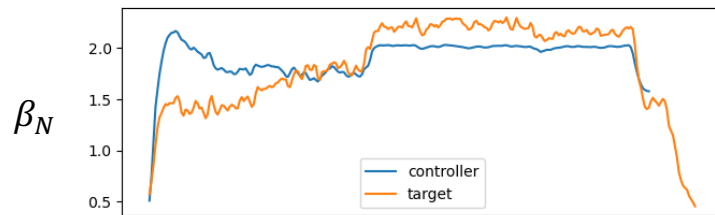
ML Linear Projection

- Nonlinear plasma behavior can be approximately mapped to a larger linear space
- The encoder, decoder, A, and B matrices are learned from DIII-D data
- MPC can be applied to this linear model to find optimal actuator trajectories



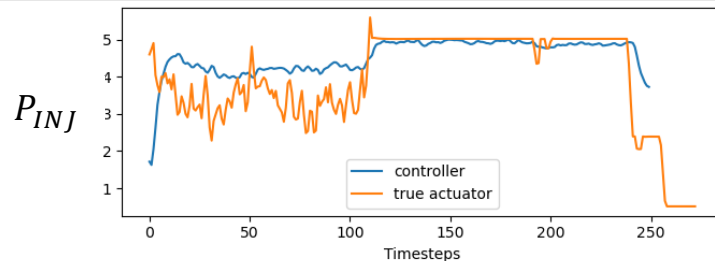
[M. Watter, 2015]

Testing out MPC Controller



— Controller result
(using PP model)

— Experimental β_N and
controller target



— MPC Controller NBI trajectory

— Past experiment NBI trajectory

- Proof of concept: control β_N with NBI heating
- The controller finds similar actuator trajectory to experiment.
- Working on full profile controller given a broader set of actuators
 - NBI power and torque, ECH heating, I_p , B_t , shaping and gas injection

Experimental validation hopefully this year...

Wanna bet
who will run
first?



Conclusions and Future Work

- ML can be good!
 - When used in correct situations
- Instability event predictors can be used to develop controllers or be integrated into control systems as safety alarms
- Profile predictor is an offline tool that can simulate full shots based on true machine actuators
 - Physics simulations require mapping artificial diagnostics and actuators
- Can we learn physics from the linear mapping learned by ML model?
 - Perhaps...

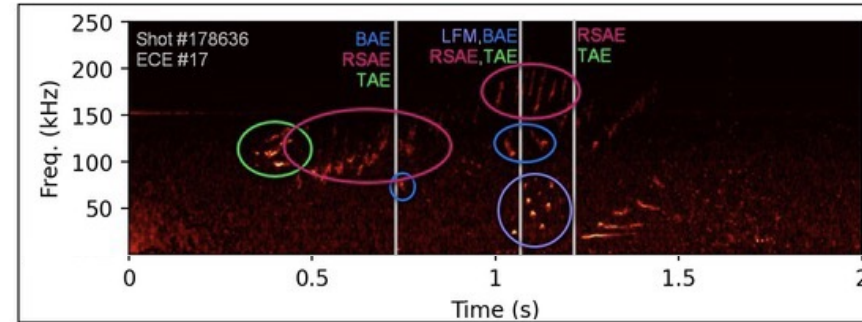
This material is based upon work supported by the U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Science, Office of Fusion Energy Sciences, using the DIII-D National Fusion Facility, a DOE Office of Science user facility, under Award DE-FC02-04ER54698. In addition this material was supported by the U.S. Department of Energy, under Awards DE-SC0015480.

Backup Slides

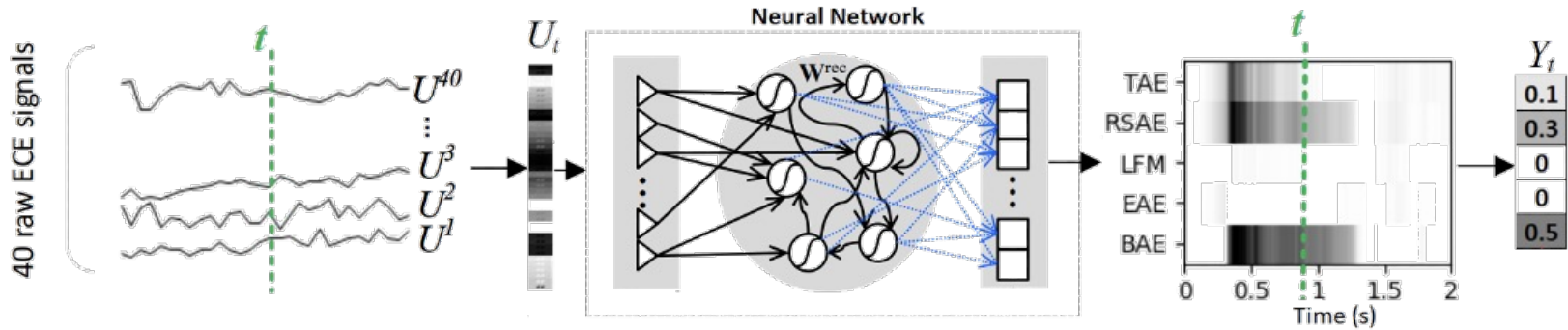
Alfvén Eigenmode Detection and Control

AE Control Introduction

- AEs occur at undamped resonances in the Alfvén continuum
- AEs degrade confinement and have potential to release enough energy to damage vessel walls
- Can be most easily identified in spectrograms of fluctuation diagnostics like ECE or CO₂
- Most straightforward form of control is adjusting P_{NBI}
 - Can be controlled by anything that will adjust Energetic Particle distribution



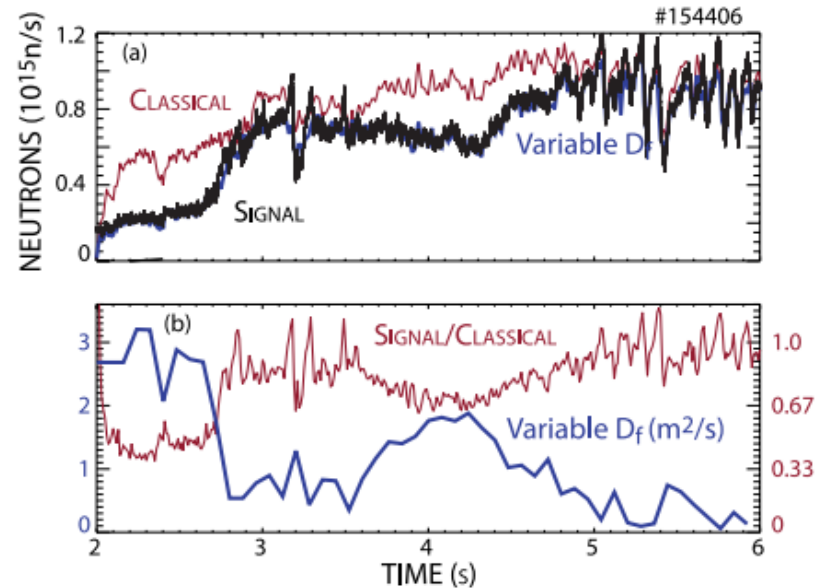
ECE-Based AE Detection



- Input: 40 high frequency ECE channels
- Output: Labels for 5 flavors of AEs
- Hand-produced labels provide 450 training and 150 validation shots
 - Skewed to RSAE and TAE activity
- Achieves >90% true positive rate with <10% false positive rate
- Runs real-time in $\approx 0.5\text{ms}$

AE Detection by Neutron Rate

- When AEs present, classical neutron rate will be much larger than measured neutron rate
- Fastest physics calculation from RABBIT [Weiland NF 2018] still takes hundreds of ms
- Need a faster model to produce classical neutron rates

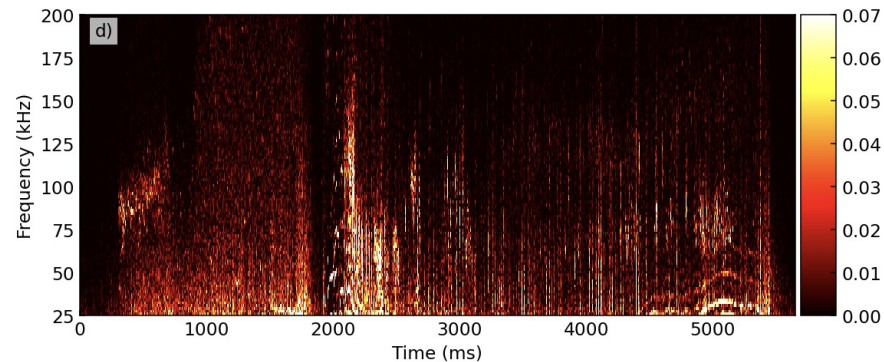
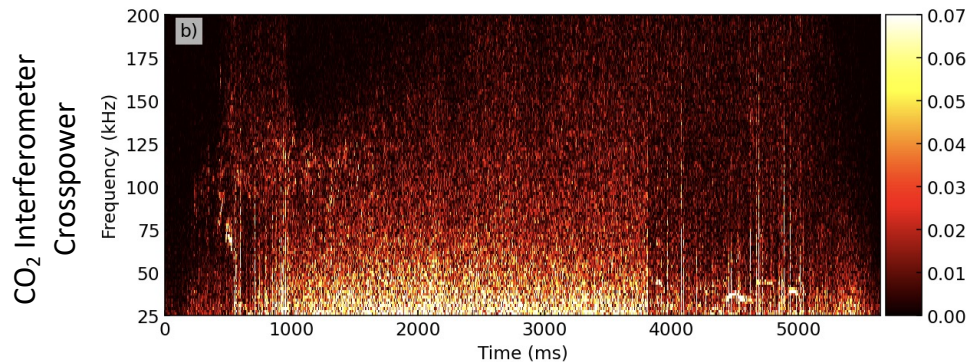
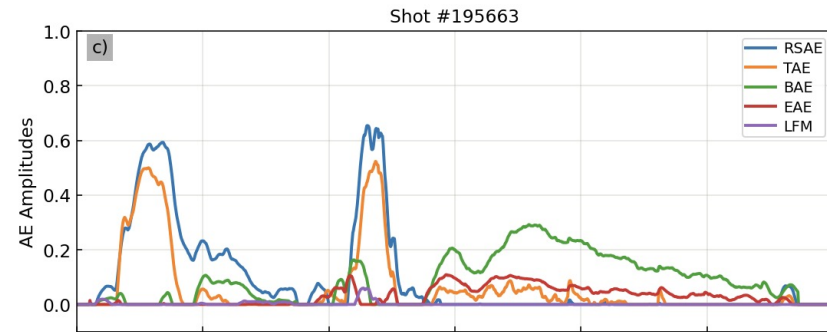
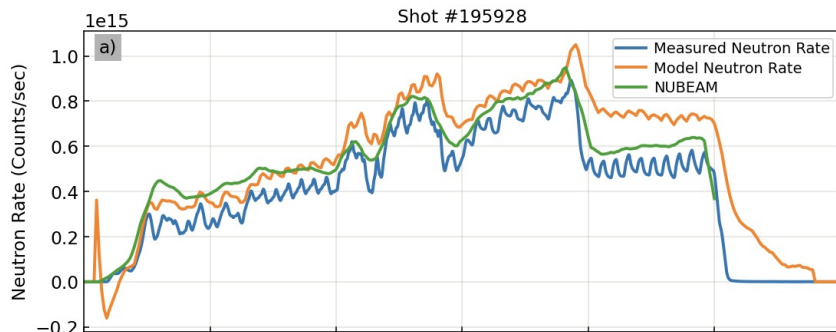


Classical Neutron Rate Prediction

- Uses NUBEAM as part of TRANSP to produce *Classical Neutron Rate* along with other NBI-related data
- Uses shape information and profiles from rtEFIT and rtThomson
- Profiles are reduced by PCA to 4 components each
- Runs real-time in $\approx 0.25\text{ms}$

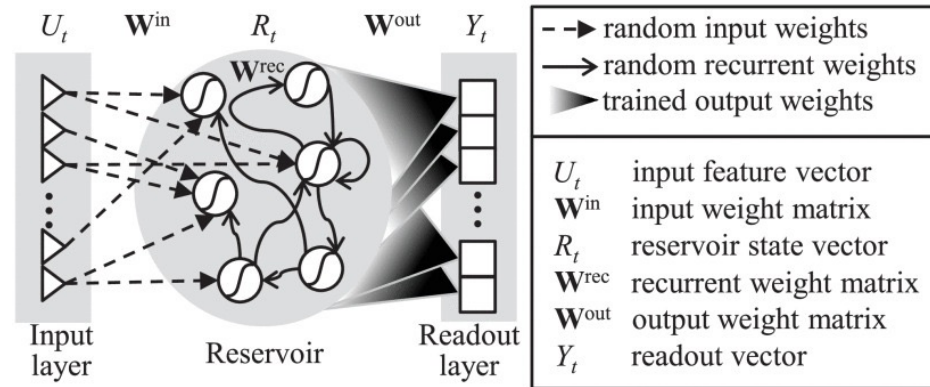
Inputs	Description	Outputs	Description
R_0	Major radius	$s_{neutron}$	Classical neutron rate
κ	Elongation	P_{shine}	Shine through power
I_p	Plasma current	P_{ex}	Charge-exchange loss power
a	Minor radius	P_{orb}	Orbit loss power
B_T	Vacuum toroidal field	$P_{b,e}$	Beam heating electron profile
δ_u	Upper triangularity	$P_{b,i}$	Beam heating ion profile
δ_l	Lower triangularity	$T_{b,e}$	Beam torque electron profile
P_{inj}	Injected power for each beam	$T_{b,i}$	Beam torque ion profile
T_{inj}	Injected torque per beam	n_b	Beam ion density profile
V_{inj}	NBI voltages per beam	j_b	Beam current drive profile
n_e	Electron density profile	P_{fast}	Fast ion pressure
T_e	Electron temperature profile		
q	Safety factor profile		
p	Plasma pressure profile		

Real-time Model Results



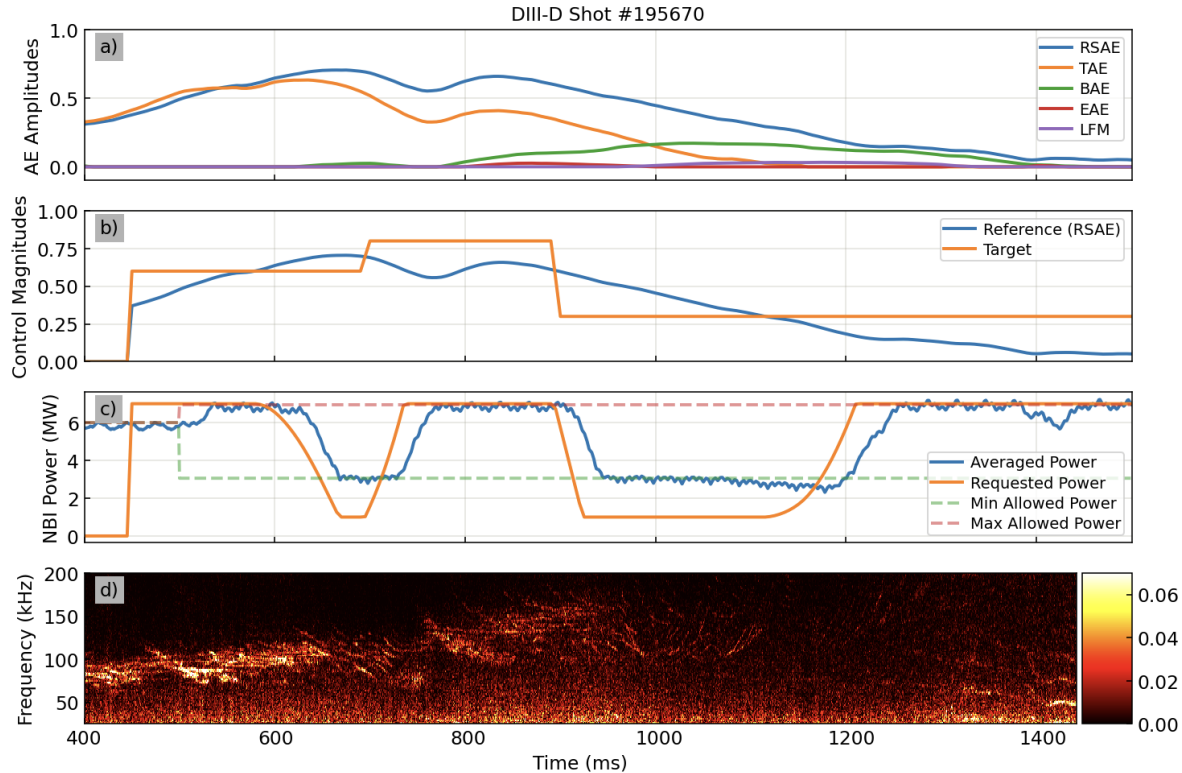
Benefit of RCN Architecture

- Lightweight models that show comparable performance to large deep learning models
 - Recurrent connections provide ‘memory’
- Basic structure easy and fast to implement on PCS
 - $< 1\text{ms}$ to run both ECE and Neutron rate models
- Since only W_{out} needs to be retrained, models can be changed without PCS changes



Experimental Control Results

- Single actuator proportional control using P_{NBI}
- Targeted AE activity in ramp-up so limited time for control
- AE amplitude follows target, but highly delayed



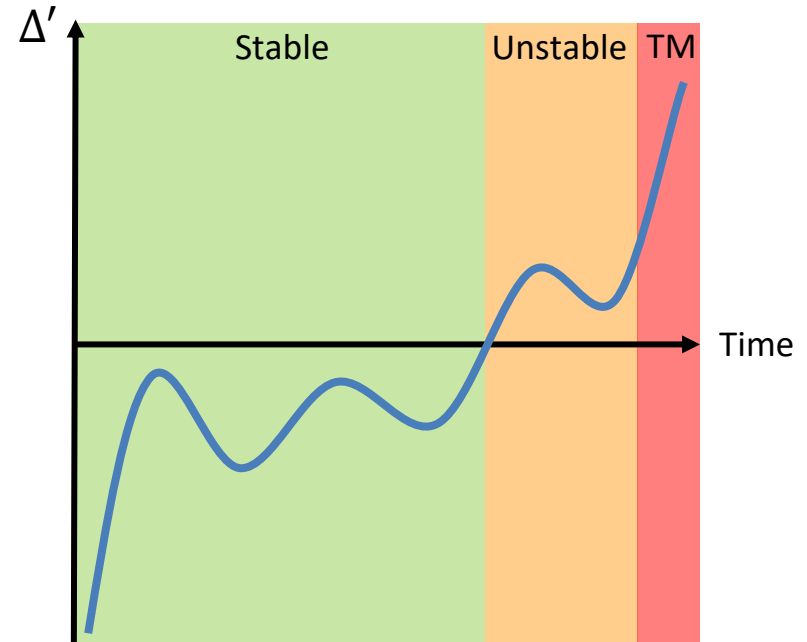
Present Limitations

- ECE detector is limited by cutoff and can be unreliable as viewing positions change
- Neutron Model requires rtEFIT and rtThomson inputs
 - Unreliable before ~1sec
- Single actuator control not the most realistic when there are other objectives
- Need to explore other ways to affect EP distribution:
 - NBI voltage modulation
 - ECH
 - Shaping parameters

STRIDE Development

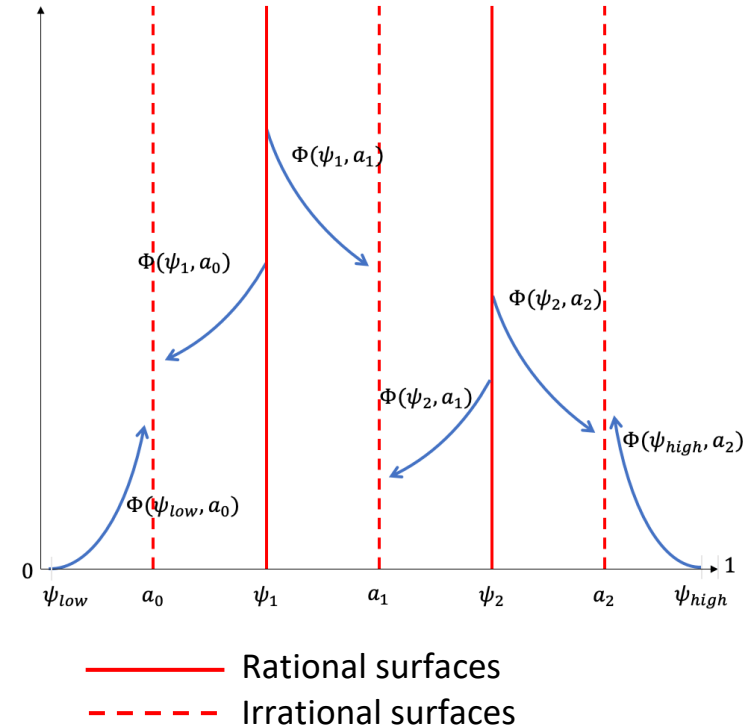
Goal for STRIDE

- Want a metric that describes TM stability – Δ'
- Must be robustly correlated with stability
- Calculation must be reproducible and reliable on database of shots



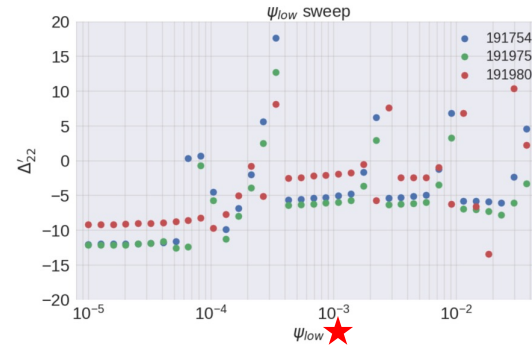
STRIDE Δ' Calculation

- Δ' calculated from integration of state transition matrix Φ
 - Subintervals split at rational surfaces and at locations in between rational surfaces
 - Allows for parallelization of integration
- Shooting method integrates away from rational surfaces
 - Matching condition at rational surfaces



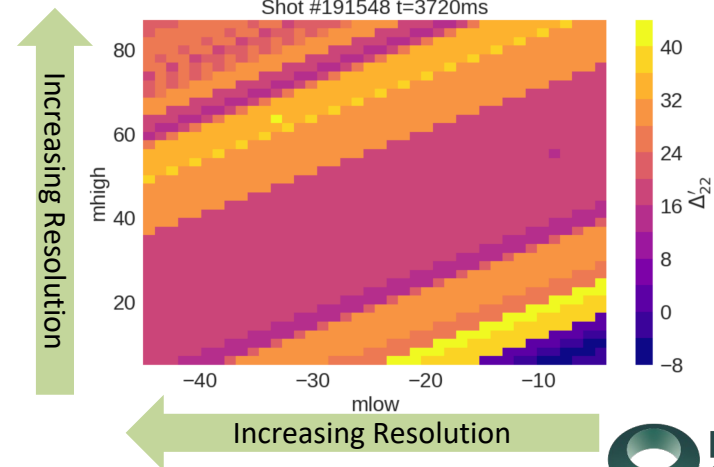
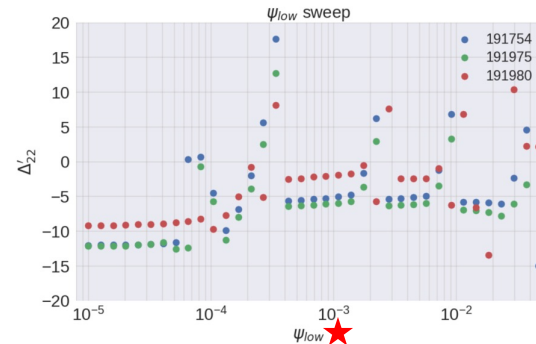
Current Problems with STRIDE

- Bounds of integration are mildly problematic
 - Should be fixable by adjusting the grid packing algorithm
- ★ Typical parameter value



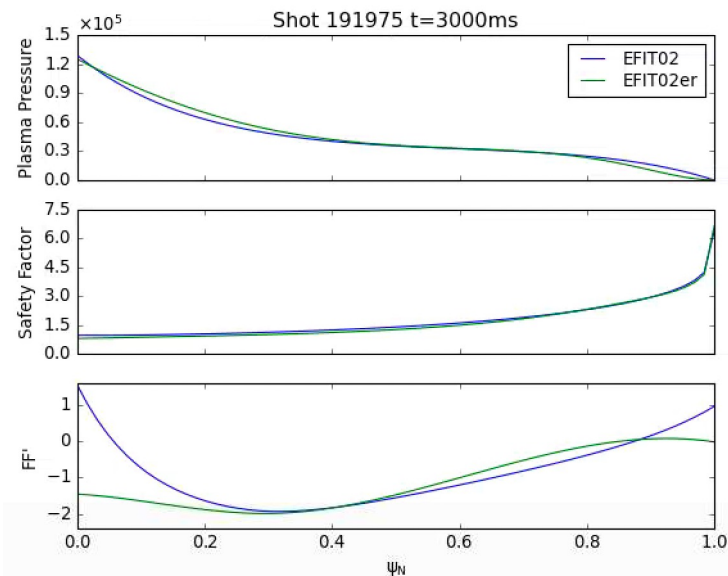
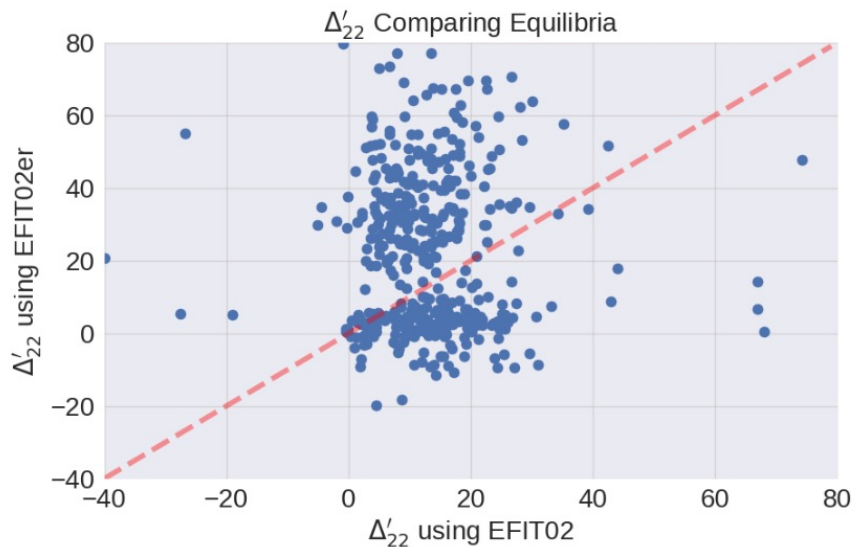
Current Problems with STRIDE

- Bounds of integration are mildly problematic
 - Should be fixable by adjusting the grid packing algorithm
- ★ Typical parameter value
- Increasing number of Fourier modes changes result
 - Not present in RDCON



STRIDE Profiles Dependence

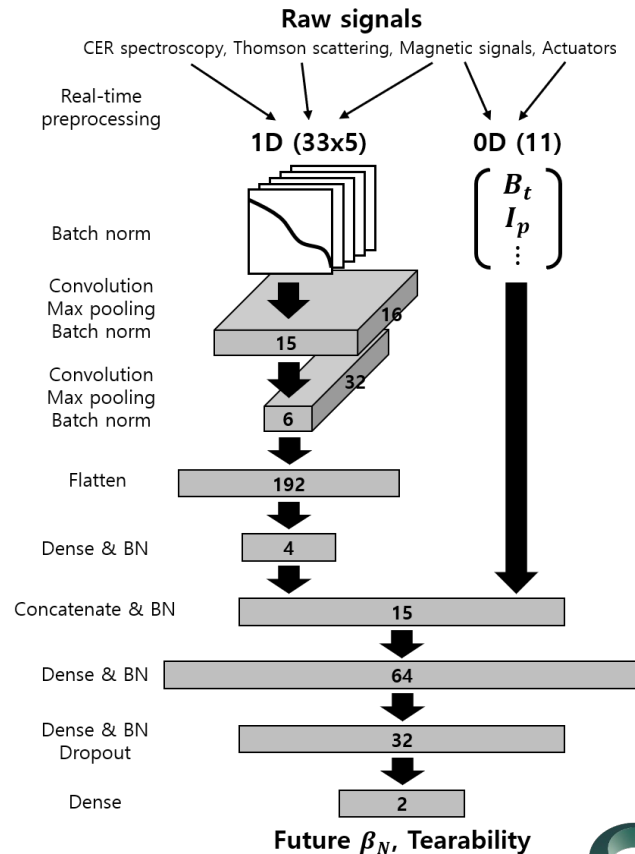
- Profile quality matters a lot Δ' and real-time profiles need to be closer to offline, kinetic-constrained equilibria



TM/RL Back-up Slides

Tearing Mode Predictor

- 12,086 parameters
 - $\approx 50\times$ more time slices than parameters
- Ensemble of 10 models provided uncertainty estimates
- Memory-free model
 - No LSTMs or other recurrent layers
 - No sense of how the profiles are evolving, adding memory could be promising



TM Model Selection

- Mean-squared error (MSE) loss

$$L_{MSE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N [(y_{1,i} - \hat{y}_{1,i})^2 + (y_{2,i} - \hat{y}_{2,i})^2]$$

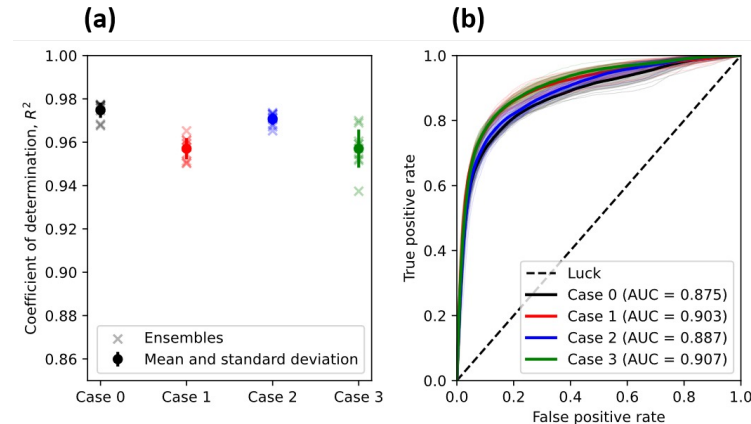
- Binary cross entropy (BCE) loss

$$L_{BCE} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N [(y_{1,i} - \hat{y}_{1,i})^2 - w_{BCE} (y_{2,i} \log \hat{y}_{2,i} + (1 - y_{2,i}) \log \hat{y}_{2,i})^2]$$

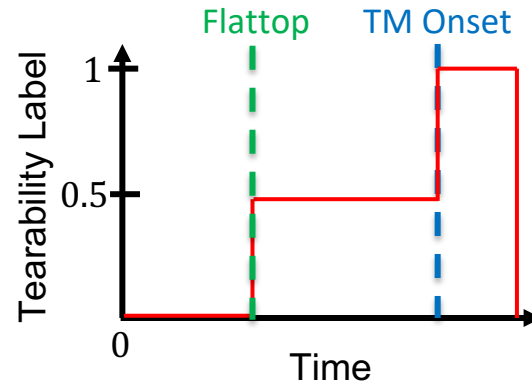
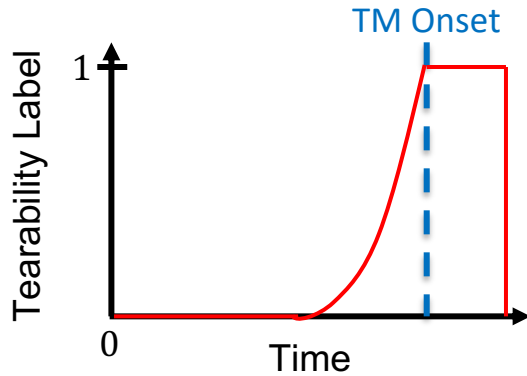
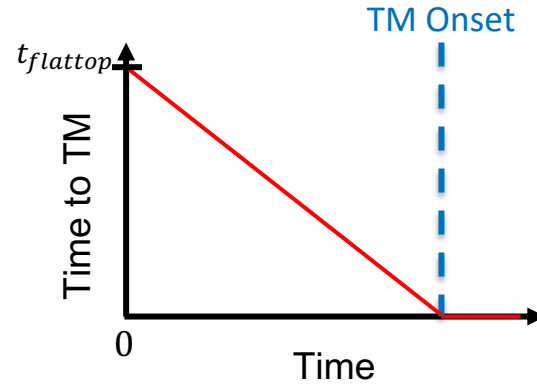
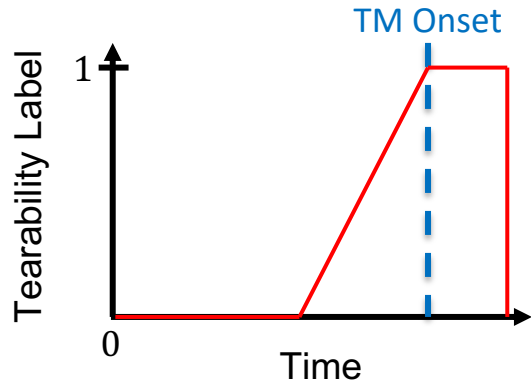
- Generally better for binary prediction tasks

TABLE II
THE INFLUENCE OF THE TYPE OF LOSS FUNCTION AND OVERSAMPLING

Case number	Loss for β_N	Loss for tearability	Over-sampling	R^2 for β_N	AUC for tearability
0	MSE	MSE	No	0.975	0.875
1	MSE	MSE	Yes	0.957	0.903
2	MSE	BCE	No	0.971	0.887
3	MSE	BCE	Yes	0.957	0.907



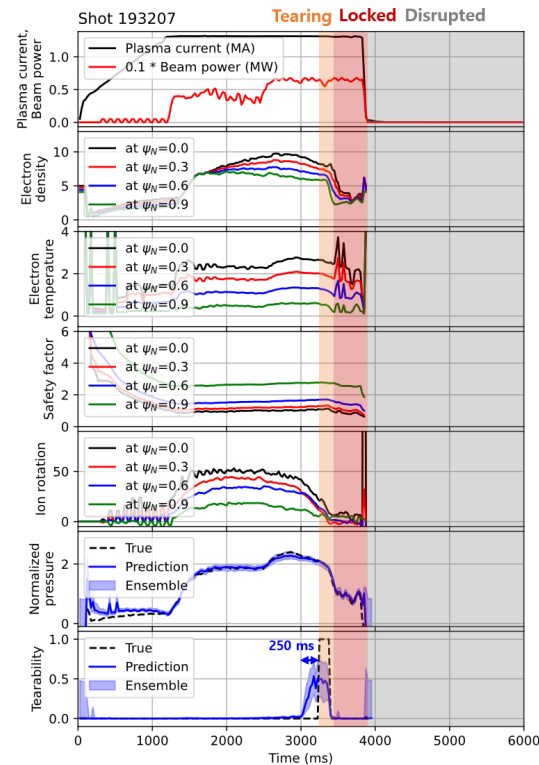
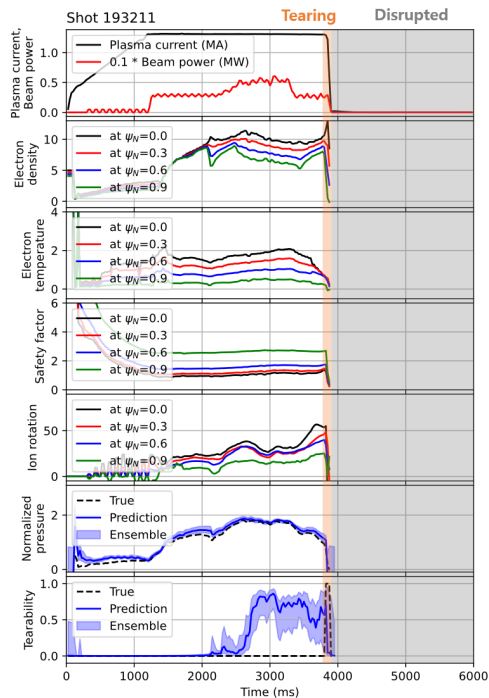
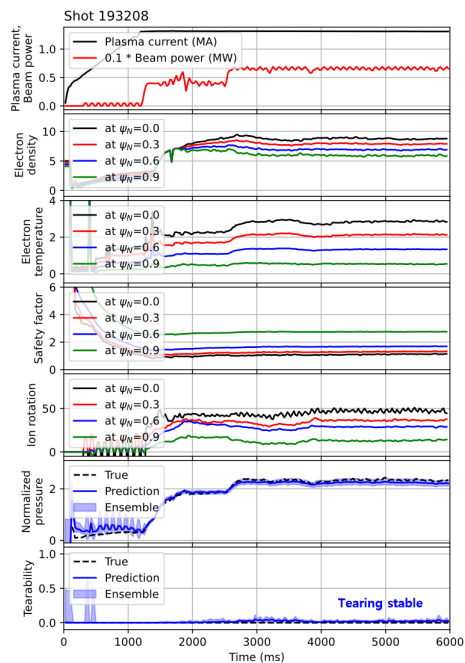
How to incorporate stability physics into labels?



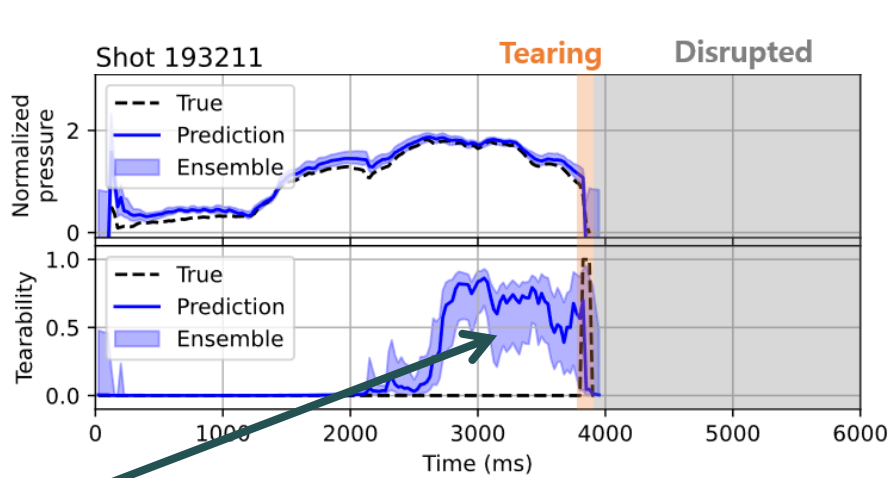
Discussion on Labels and Predictor

- Even with caveats to TM labels, model has good performance at predicting TMs
 - At present, no sense of marginal stability
- Incorporating physics insights to improve labels seems like it would provide better performance
- All of this starts incorporating biases, so need to be very careful with changes made

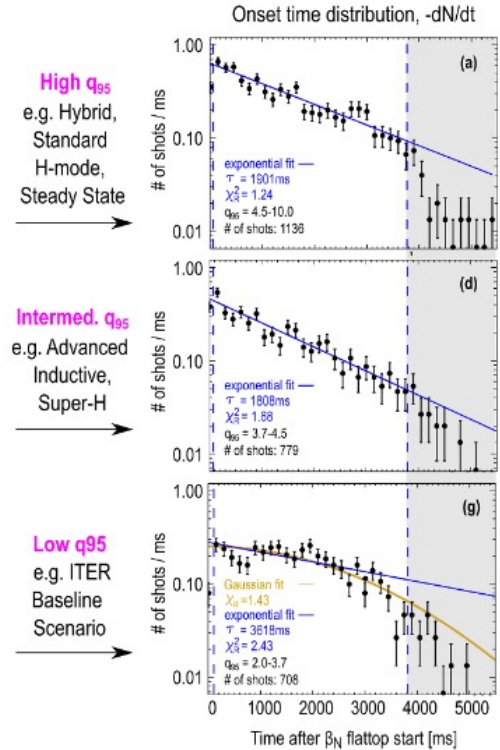
TM Predictor Results



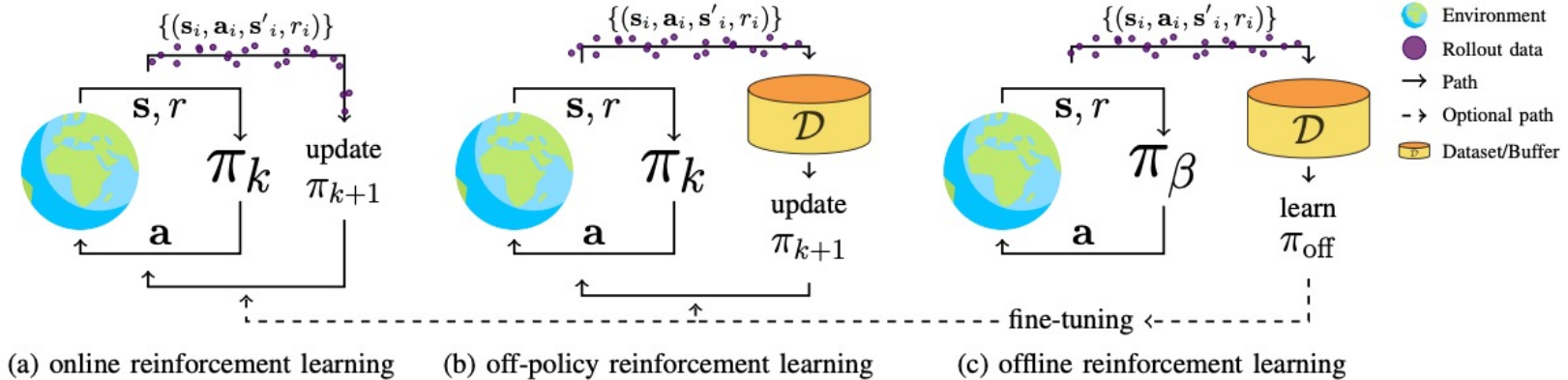
TM Predictor Results



- Unstable but waiting for seed event?
- Losses and AUC metric punish this behavior, but we want this early warning



Reinforcement Learning Overview



(a) online reinforcement learning

(b) off-policy reinforcement learning

(c) offline reinforcement learning

- Cannot test new policies on environment
- Restricted to offline RL

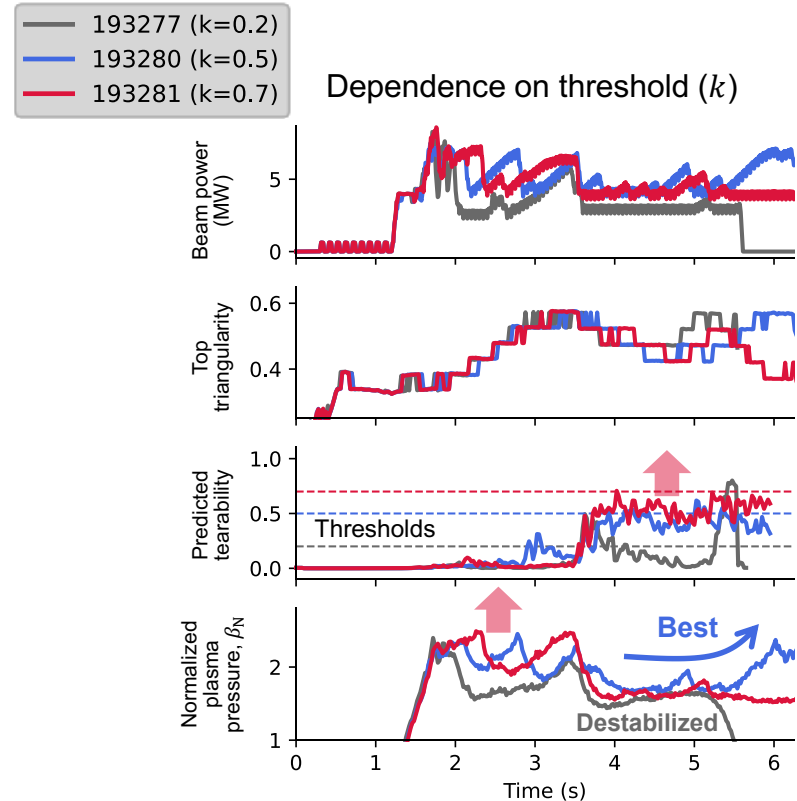
- Train ML simulator for environment – learn a single instability
- Environment models gives intuition to plasma behavior

RL Background

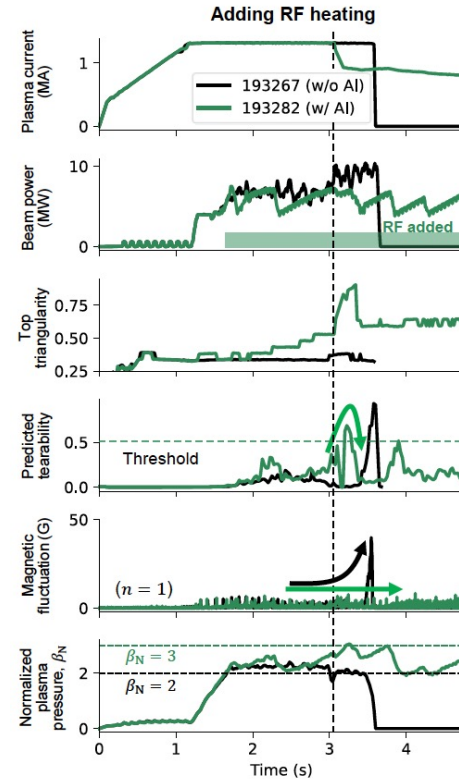
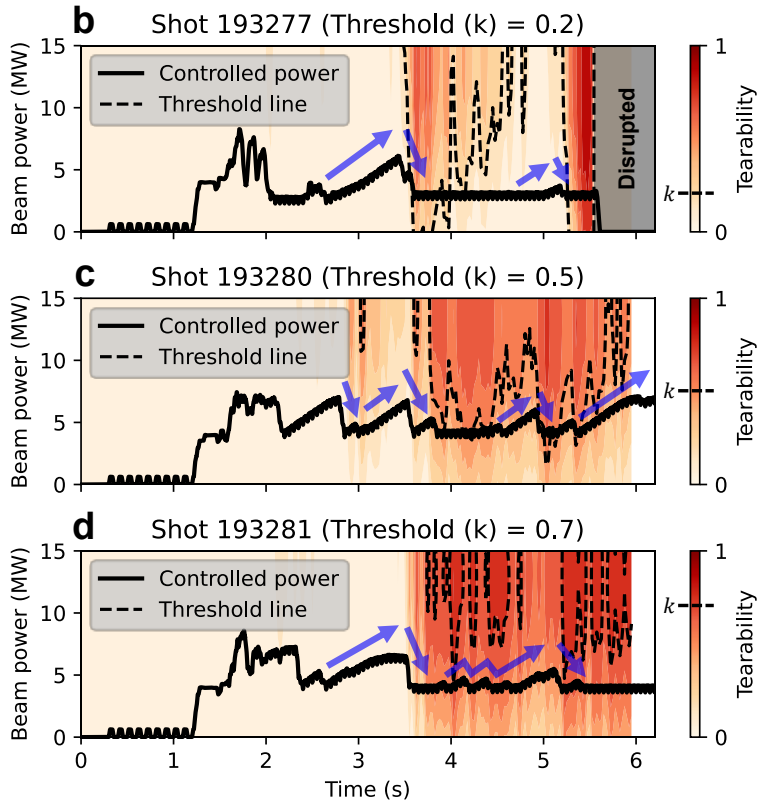
- Deep Deterministic Policy Gradient
 - Actor-critic type of RL
 - Learns Q^* (value function) and a^* (optimal policy) concurrently
- Uses off-policy data to learn Q function
- Uses Q function to learn policy

RL Threshold Dependence

- Lower threshold = safer controller
 - Less likely to cause TMs but at cost of lower β_N
- Higher threshold = riskier controller
 - Higher β_N but more likely to cause TMs
- Moderate threshold found most effective in experimental shots on DIII-D



RL Results



Advantages of RL Control

- An RL agent can balance multiple actuators to take advantage of nonlinear affects
 - RL controller can find complex trajectories classical control cannot
- Long-term trajectory planning
 - This agent is a "Greedy bandit"
 - Tries to maximize rewards single step into the future
 - Future version can get long term planning by taking advantage of Q-learning

The Heart of Q-Learning

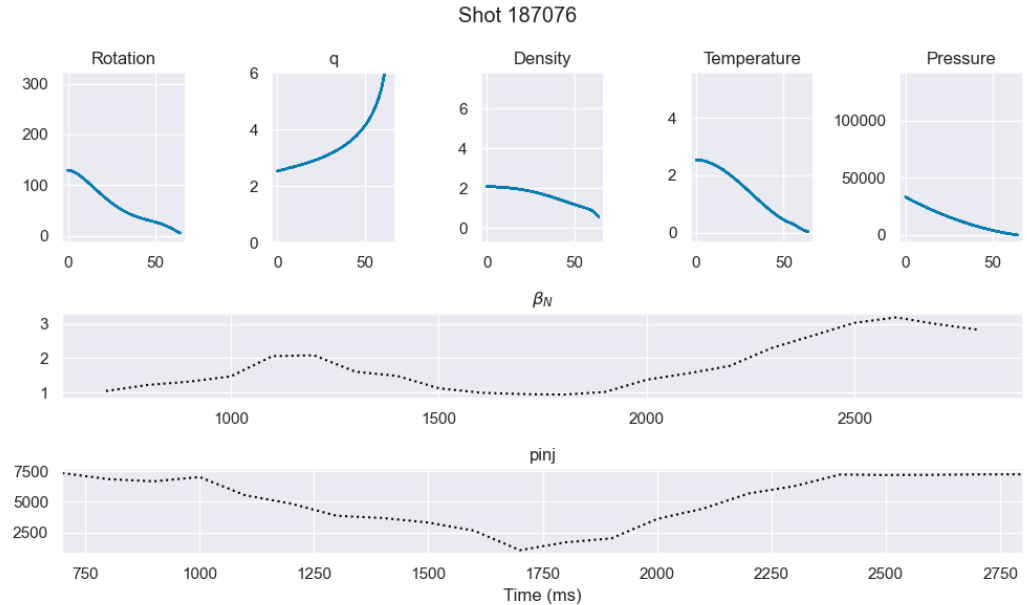
$$Q_{new}(s_t, a_t) \leftarrow Q(s_t, a_t) + \alpha [r_{t+1} + \gamma \max_{a'} (Q(s_t, a')) - Q(s_t, a_t)]$$

- Bellman equation
 - Q – Value function (or just Q-function)
 - s_t, a_t – States and actions at time t
 - α – Learning rate (hyperparameter)
 - How quickly do we change Q
 - r_{t+1} – Reward from doing a_t at s_t
 - γ – Discount rate (hyperparameter)
 - How much do we care/trust the future?

Long Term Planning

$$\max_{a'} Q(s_{t+1}, a')$$

- Need some model that can produce s_{t+1} from (s_t, a_t)
 - This could be a fully physics model!
- In the meantime, more ML



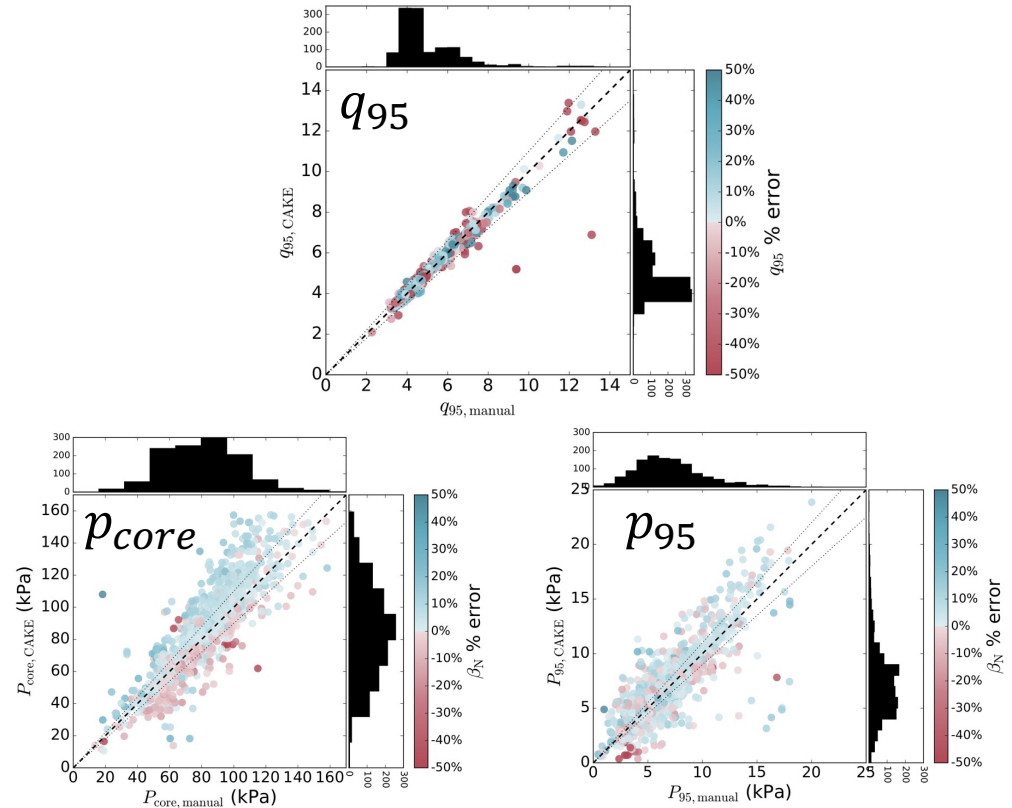
Ground Truth

Predictions —————

Real-time Tools: rtCAKENN and rtGPEC

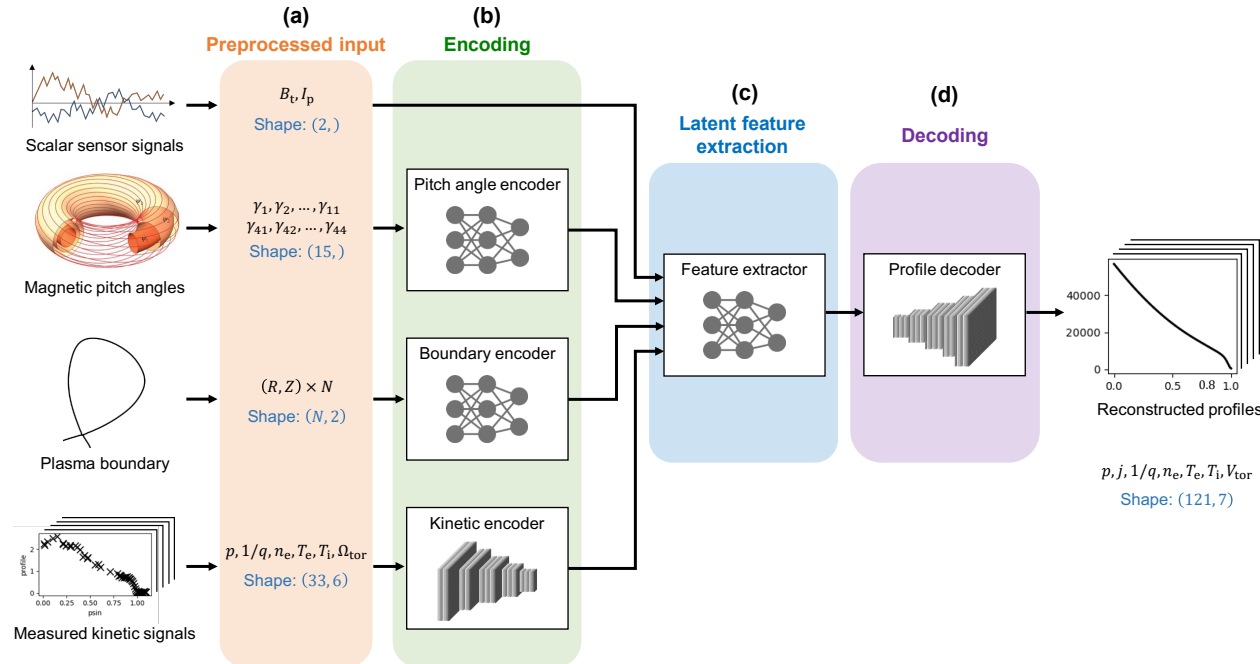
CAKE Database

- Large database of constrained equilibria
- Reconstructions are more consistent across shots
- Large size + Consistency = Ideal for machine learning!

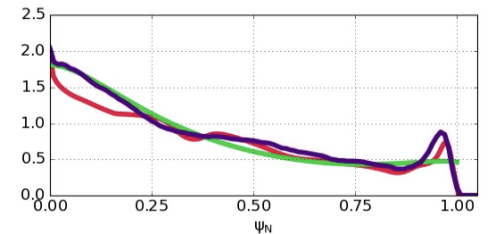
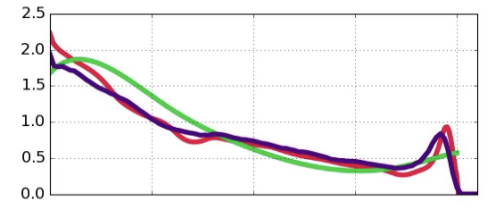
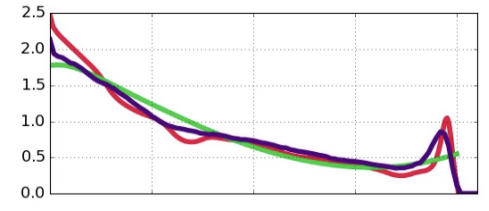
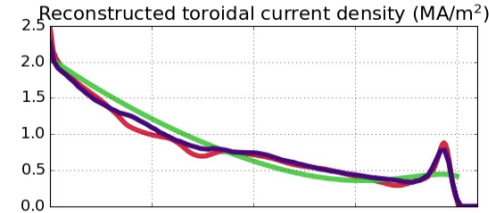
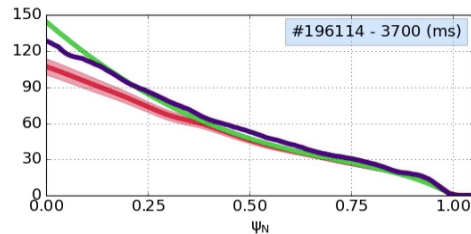
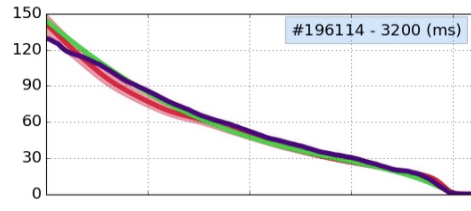
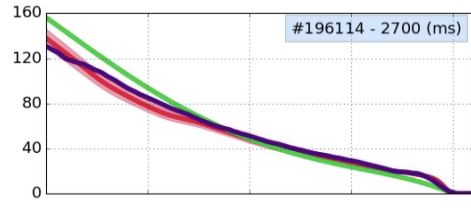
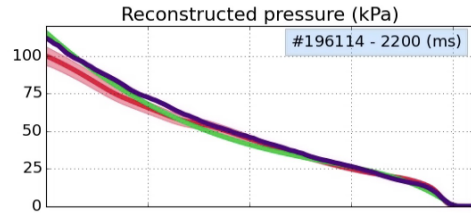


rtCAKENN Architecture

- Ensemble of 10 identical architecture models
 - Improves performance and gives uncertainties
- Produces profiles:
 - $p, J, \frac{1}{q}, n_e, T_e, T_i, v_{tor}$
- Runs in DIII-D PCS in $\approx 7.7\text{ms}$



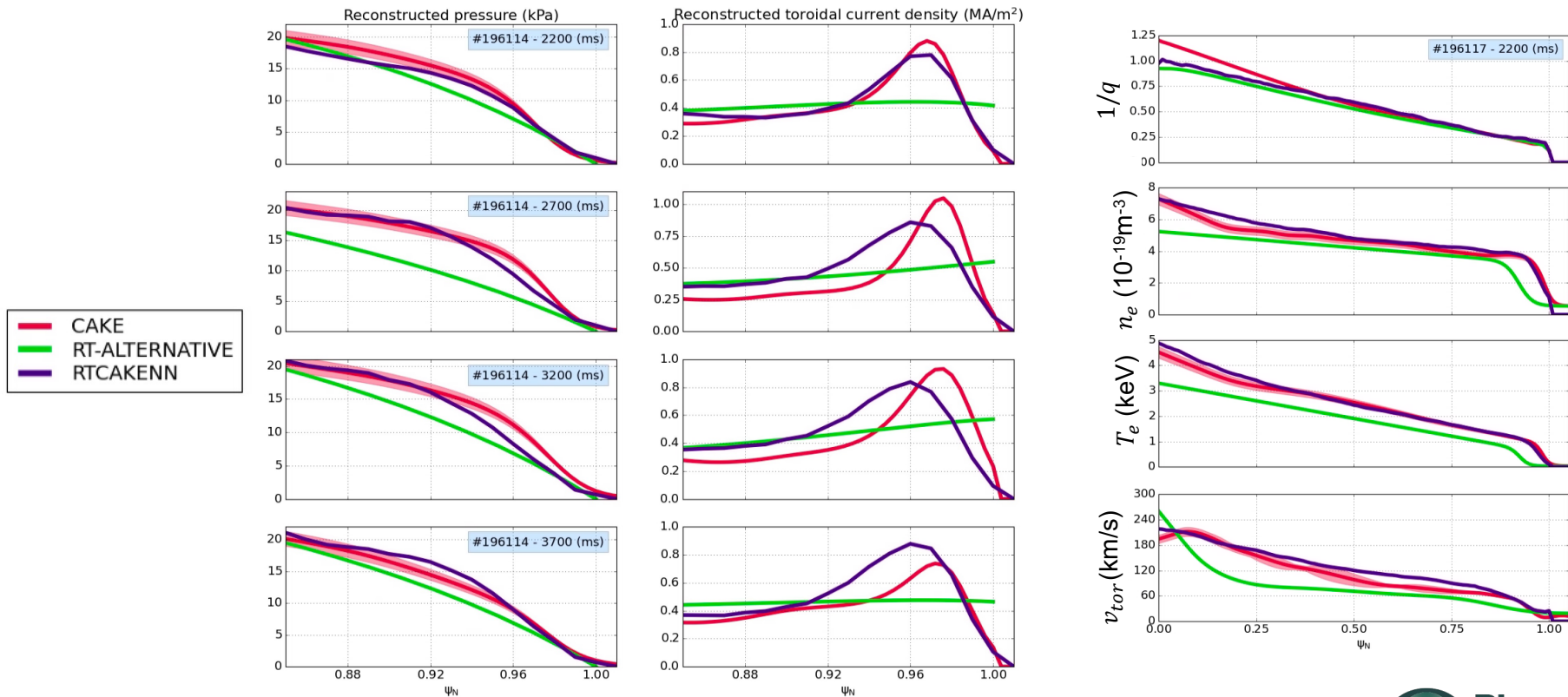
RTCAKENN agrees with CAKE and is more accurate than RT-Alternatives



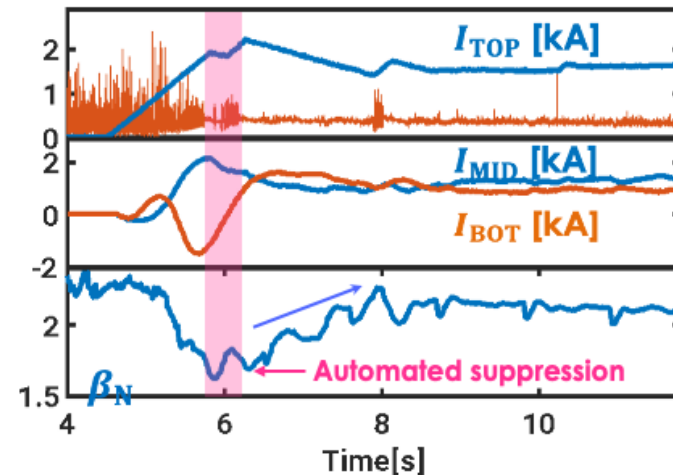
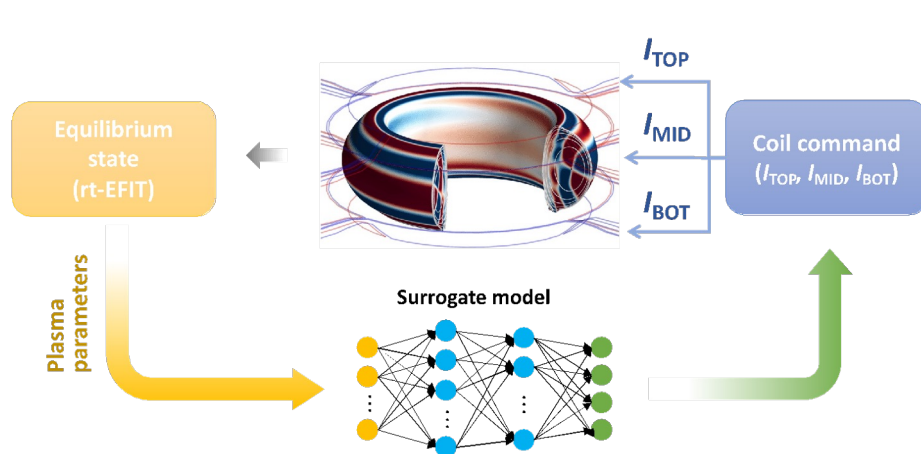
[Shousha NF 2023]



RTCAKENN Captures Pedestal Behavior and J Well



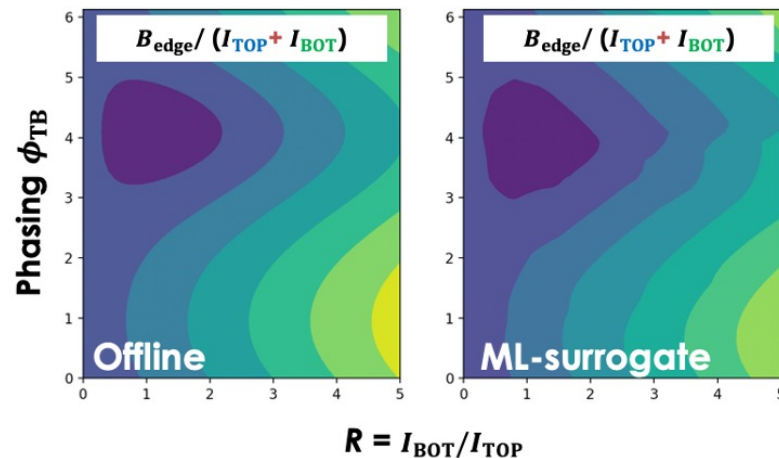
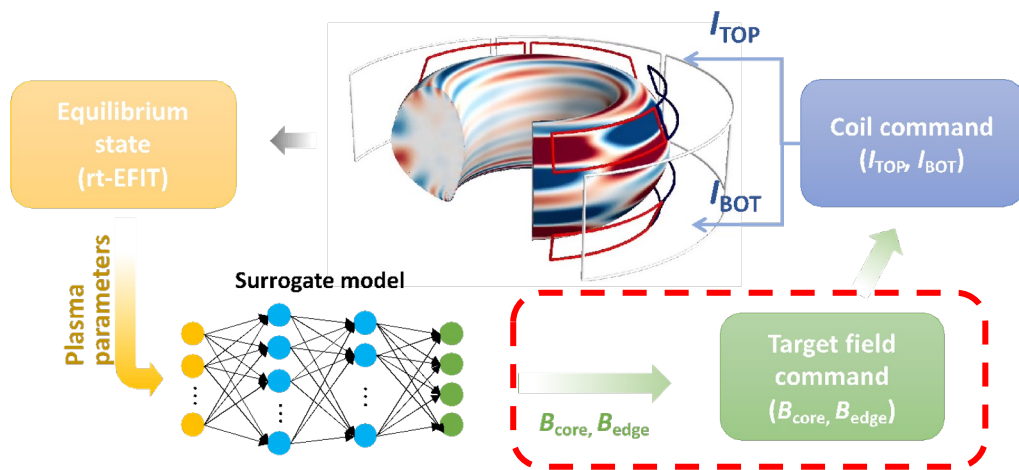
ML-technique is integrated into the adaptive ELM controller for automated safe ELM suppression without empirical approach



- An unoptimized spectrum leads to disruption. [C. Paz-Soldan, PRL 15] → Empirical spectrum.
- An empirical approach is not feasible in ITER.
- Model-based 3D-coil configuration (ERMP). [J.-K. Park, NP 18, S.M. Yang, NC accepted]
- ML-surrogate model to accelerate offline derivation ($\sim s \rightarrow \sim ms$).
- Automated & adaptive ELM control in KSTAR without empirical or human decision. → ITER applicable.

A more general surrogate model is developed and will be tested in DIII-D

- Surrogate model for perturbed 3D-field calculation (rt-GPEC) instead of coil configuration.
- Direct model of core/edge 3D fields ($B_{\text{core/edge}}$).
 - Allows extended and flexible applications (including non-RMP).
- Reasonable preliminary results.



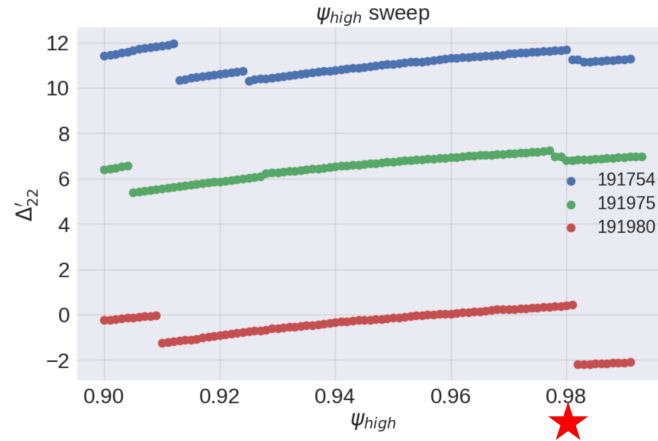
Misc Back-up Slides

Δ' Definition

$$\Delta'_{22} = \begin{bmatrix} \Delta'_{LL} & \Delta'_{RL} \\ \Delta'_{LR} & \Delta'_{RR} \end{bmatrix}$$

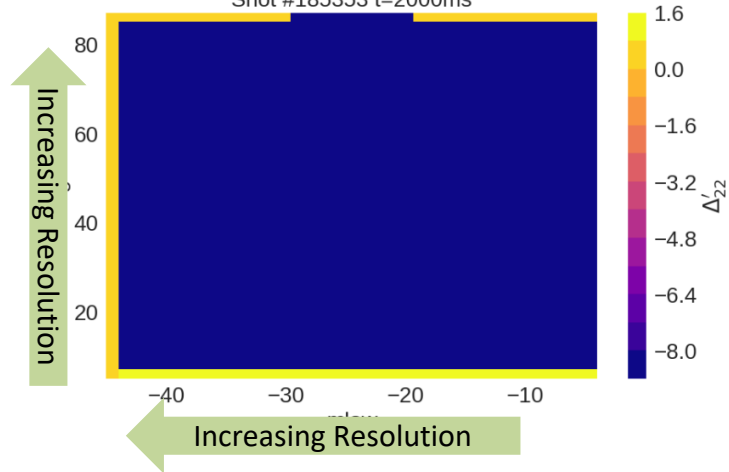
- For a given rational surface ($q = 2$)
- In slab model definition is a scalar
- In cylindrical geometry matrix is diagonal (no coupling between different m modes)
- In toroidal geometry, **toroidicity and noncircularity couple different m modes**

STRIDE Parameter Dependence Extras



RDCON Sweep

Shot #185353 t=2000ms



STRIDE Equilibria Extras

