



# Portraying Double Higgs at the Large Hadron Collider

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We examine the discovery potential for double Higgs production at the high luminosity LHC in the final state with two b-tagged jets, two leptons and missing transverse momentum. Although this dilepton final state has been considered a difficult channel due to the large backgrounds, we argue that it is possible to obtain a sizable signal significance, by adopting a deep learning framework making full use of the relevant kinematics along with the jet images from the Higgs decay. The proposed method can be easily generalized to the semi-leptonic channel of double Higgs production, as well as to other processes with similar final states.

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## 1. Introduction

The discovery of the Higgs boson (*h*) with a mass  $m_h = 125$  GeV [1,2] jumpstarted a comprehensive program of the precision measurements of all Higgs couplings [3]. The current results for the couplings to fermions and gauge bosons [4] appear to be in agreement with the SM predictions. However, probing the triple and quartic Higgs self-couplings is notoriously difficult [5–12]. Yet, the knowledge of those couplings is crucial for understanding the exact mechanism of electroweak symmetry breaking and the origin of mass in our universe. The measurement of double Higgs production and the associated triple Higgs coupling measurement is a guaranteed physics at the next run of the LHC program [3, 13] among many possibilities [14, 15].

The Higgs self-interaction is parameterized as  $V = \frac{m_h^2}{2}h^2 + \kappa_3\lambda_3^{SM}vh^3 + \frac{1}{4}\kappa_4\lambda_4^{SM}h^4$ , where  $\lambda_3^{SM} = \lambda_4^{SM} = \frac{m_h^2}{2v^2}$  are the SM values,  $\kappa_3$  and  $\kappa_4$  parameterize deviations from those, and  $v \approx 256$  GeV is the Higgs vacuum expectation value. In order to access  $\kappa_3$  ( $\kappa_4$ ), one has to measure the double (triple) Higgs boson production at the LHC with high luminosity (HL) or future colliders.

Due to the small signal cross-section  $(\sigma_{hh})$ , *it is necessary to combine as many different channels as possible to discover the double Higgs production and study the triple Higgs coupling* [13]. Among all possible channels, one specific process,  $hh \rightarrow (b\bar{b})(W^{\pm}W^{\mp})$ , has so far been relatively overlooked, although it has the second largest branching fraction. This is mainly due to the large SM background cross-section  $\sigma_{bknd} \sim 10^5 \sigma_{hh}$  (at the 14 TeV LHC), which is predominantly due to top quark pair production  $(t\bar{t})$ . In particular, there have been very few studies on the resulting dilepton final state [9–12, 16]. The existing analyses employ sophisticated algorithms (neural networks (NN) [9], deep neural networks (DNN) [12, 17], boosted decision tree (BDT) [10, 16], etc.) to increase the signal sensitivity, but show somewhat pessimistic results, with a significance no better than 1 $\sigma$  at the HL-LHC with 3 ab<sup>-1</sup> luminosity [9, 10, 12, 16].

## 2. Improvement in the signal signal significance via kinematics and color-flow

There have been a lot of studies on the double Higgs but none of them emphasizes the potential role of the dilepton final state and it was considered to be one of worst channels. It was only very recent that this channel has been revisited. Ref. [18] proposes a novel kinematic method, which relies on two new kinematic functions, *Topness* and *Higgsness* [18]. They characterize features of the major  $(t\bar{t})$  background and the signal (hh) events, respectively, rendering a way to disentangle two different event topologies. The method also utilizes two less commonly used variables, the subsystem  $M_{T2}$  (or subsystem  $M_2$ ) [19–21] for  $t\bar{t}$  production and the subsystem  $\sqrt{\hat{s}_{min}}$  (or subsystem  $M_1$ ) [21–23] for *hh* production. The basic idea behind this approach is very general but works the best with the double Higgs production in the dilepton channel, as described below.

For any given event, *Topness* [18, 24] quantifies the degree of consistency to the dileptonic  $t\bar{t}$  production, with 6 unknowns (the three-momenta of the two neutrinos,  $\vec{p}_v$  and  $\vec{p}_{\bar{v}}$ ) and four onshell constraints,  $m_t$ ,  $m_{\bar{t}}$ ,  $m_{W^+}$  and  $m_{W^-}$ . An ansatz for the neutrino momenta can be obtained by minimizing the quantity

$$\chi_{ij}^{2} \equiv \min_{\vec{p}_{T}=\vec{p}_{vT}+\vec{p}_{\bar{v}T}} \left[ \frac{\left(m_{b_{i}\ell+v}^{2}-m_{t}^{2}\right)^{2}}{\sigma_{t}^{4}} + \frac{\left(m_{\ell+v}^{2}-m_{W}^{2}\right)^{2}}{\sigma_{W}^{4}} + \frac{\left(m_{b_{j}\ell-\bar{v}}^{2}-m_{t}^{2}\right)^{2}}{\sigma_{t}^{4}} + \frac{\left(m_{\ell-\bar{v}}^{2}-m_{W}^{2}\right)^{2}}{\sigma_{W}^{4}} \right],$$



**Figure 1:** Two-dimensional correlation plots for Higgsness and Topness for signal (left) and all backgrounds (right). The solid curve represents a suitable cut to maximize the signal significance.

subjected to the missing transverse momentum constraint,  $\vec{p}_T = \vec{p}_{vT} + \vec{p}_{\bar{v}T}$ . Since there is a twofold ambiguity in the paring of a *b*-quark and a lepton, we define *Topness* as the smaller of the two  $\chi^2$ s,

$$T \equiv \min\left(\chi_{12}^2, \chi_{21}^2\right).$$
 (2.1)

In double Higgs production, the invariant mass,  $m_{bb}$ , cut has been used to identify the Higgs decay  $(h \rightarrow b\bar{b})$  and suppress the SM backgrounds. To characterize the decay of the other Higgs boson,  $h \rightarrow WW^* \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^- v \bar{v}$ , we introduce *Higgsness* [18] as follows:

$$H \equiv \min\left[\frac{\left(m_{\ell^+\ell^-\nu\bar{\nu}}^2 - m_{h}^2\right)^2}{\sigma_{h_{\ell}}^4} + \frac{\left(m_{\nu\bar{\nu}}^2 - m_{\nu\bar{\nu},peak}^2\right)^2}{\sigma_{\nu}^4}\right]$$
(2.2)

$$+ \min\left(\frac{\left(m_{\ell^+\nu}^2 - m_W^2\right)^2}{\sigma_W^4} + \frac{\left(m_{\ell^-\bar{\nu}}^2 - m_{W^*,peak}^2\right)^2}{\sigma_{W_*}^4}, \ \frac{\left(m_{\ell^-\bar{\nu}}^2 - m_W^2\right)^2}{\sigma_W^4} + \frac{\left(m_{\ell^+\nu}^2 - m_{W^*,peak}^2\right)^2}{\sigma_{W_*}^4}\right)\right]$$

where  $m_{W^*}$  is the invariant mass of the lepton-neutrino pair resulting from the off-shell W. The  $m_{W^*}$  distribution has an end-point at around  $m_h - m_W$ , and its peak is located at

$$m_{W^*}^{peak} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{3}} \sqrt{2 \left( m_h^2 + m_W^2 \right) - \sqrt{m_h^4 + 14 m_h^2 m_W^2 + m_W^4}} \,. \tag{2.3}$$

Note also that  $m_{v\bar{v}}^{peak} = m_{\ell\ell}^{peak} \approx 30 \text{ GeV}$  is the location of the peak in the  $\frac{d\sigma}{dm_{v\bar{v}}}$  or  $\frac{d\sigma}{dm_{\ell\ell}}$  distribution [18, 25]. The  $\sigma$  parameters in Eqs. (2.1) and (2.3) stand for the experimental uncertainties and intrinsic particle widths. In principle, they can be treated as free parameters, and tuned by a neutral network (NN) or a boosted decision tree (BDT) algorithms. In our numerical study, we choose  $\sigma_t = 5 \text{ GeV}, \sigma_W = 5 \text{ GeV}, \sigma_{W^*} = 5 \text{ GeV}, \sigma_{h\ell} = 2 \text{ GeV}, \text{ and } \sigma_v = 10 \text{ GeV}.$  For detailed discussion in the rest of this article, we follow the same procedure described in Ref. [18] for event generation of signal and background, parton-shower / hadronization and semi-realistic detector effects.

Scatter distributions of *Higgsness* and *Topness* are shown in Fig. 1 for (left) the signal and (right) all the backgrounds ( $t\bar{t}, t\bar{t}h, t\bar{t}V, \ell\ell b j, \tau\tau bb$  and others). The dominant  $t\bar{t}$  events are expected to be on the lower-right corner with smaller *Topness* and larger *Higgsness*. The *hh* events are, on the other hand, expected to have smaller *Higgsness* and larger *Topness*. This motivates the use of a curve in the (log *H*, log *T*) space as a cut in order to separate signal and backgrounds.



**Figure 2:** The (preliminary) cumulative average of the images for the signal (top) and the  $t\bar{t}$  background (bottom). The origin of the  $(\phi, \eta)$  plane is taken to be the center of the *b* quark pair and the density indicates the total  $p_T$  in each pixel. Images from the left to the right are obtained from charged hadrons (1st column), neutral hadrons (2nd), and photons (3rd).

Along with *Higgsness* and *Topness*, we employ the  $M_{T2}$  variables for the  $b\bar{b}$  subsystem  $(M_{T2}^{(b)})$ and the lepton subsystem  $(M_{T2}^{(\ell)})$  [20], and the subsystem  $\hat{s}_{min}^{(\ell\ell)}$  variable for  $h \to W^{\pm}W^{*\mp} \to \ell^+ \ell^- v \bar{v}$ [22, 23]. The  $M_{T2}$  is defined as

$$M_{T2}(\tilde{m}) \equiv \min\{\max[M_{TP_1}(\vec{p}_{\nu T}, \tilde{m}), M_{TP_2}(\vec{p}_{\bar{\nu}T}, \tilde{m})]\},$$
(2.4)

where  $\tilde{m}$  is the test mass for the daughter particle. The minimization among the transverse masses of the parent particles  $M_{TP_i}$  (i = 1, 2) is performed over the transverse neutrino momenta  $\vec{p}_{vT}$  and  $\vec{p}_{\bar{v}T}$  subjected to the  $\vec{p}_T$  constraint [19–21, 26–29]. In the case of  $M_{T2}^{(b)}$ , the two Ws play a role of two missing neutrinos. The vertical lines at  $M_{T2}^{(b)} = 190$  GeV and  $M_{T2}^{(\ell)} = 6$  GeV represent the optimized cuts, suppressing  $t\bar{t}$  and  $\tau\tau bb$  (Drell-Yan) backgrounds respectively.

The  $\hat{s}_{min}^{(v)}$  variable [21–23] is defined as

$$\hat{s}_{min}^{(v)} = m_v^2 + 2\left(\sqrt{|\vec{P}_T^v|^2 + m_v^2}|\vec{p}_T| - \vec{P}_T^v \cdot \vec{p}_T\right),\tag{2.5}$$

where the script (v) represents a set of visible particles under consideration. The  $m_v$  and  $\vec{P}_T^v$  denote their invariant mass and transverse momentum, respectively. The  $\hat{s}_{min}^{(v)}$  variable provides the minimum value of the Mandelstam invariant mass  $\hat{s}$  which is consistent with the observed visible 4-momentum vector. The  $\sqrt{\hat{s}_{min}^{(\ell\ell)}}$  distribution has an endpoint at around  $m_h$  for hh events. All other backgrounds, however, extend above this point. This justifies the use  $\sqrt{\hat{s}_{min}^{(\ell\ell)}} < 130$  GeV as a cut to reduce the backgrounds. We observe that  $\sqrt{\hat{s}_{min}^{(bb\ell\ell)}}(hh)$  provides a good measure of the true  $\sqrt{\hat{s}}(hh)$ , while  $\sqrt{\hat{s}_{min}^{(bb\ell\ell)}}(t\bar{t})$  peaks lower, near the  $2m_t$  threshold. Secondly, both  $\sqrt{\hat{s}}(hh)$  and  $\sqrt{\hat{s}}(t\bar{t})$  peak at



**Figure 3:** The same as in Fig. 2 but for leptons (1st column) and neutrinos with approximate momentum reconstruction using Higgsness (2nd) and Topness (3rd).

~ 400 GeV. This implies that while the two top quarks are produced near threshold  $(2m_t)$ , the two Higgs bosons are produced well above the corresponding  $2m_h$  threshold. Consequently, the two top quarks are more or less at rest, while the two Higgs bosons are relatively boosted and their decay products tend to be more collimated. This observation motivates the use of simple kinematic variables such as  $\Delta R_{\ell\ell}$ ,  $\Delta R_{bb}$ ,  $m_{\ell\ell}$  and  $m_{bb}$  as a part of basic selection cuts introduced in Ref. [18].

Another difference between the signal  $(hh \rightarrow WW^* \rightarrow b\bar{b}\ell\bar{\ell}v\bar{v})$  and the dominant background  $(t\bar{t} \rightarrow b\bar{b}\ell\bar{\ell}v\bar{v})$  is that two *b*-quarks in the signal arise from the color-singlet (*h*) and those in the  $t\bar{t}$  from color-octet (*gg* in the initial state). Therefore hadrons from the color singlet tend to be closer to each other [30–33]. Ref. [34] utilized the color-flow (first time for double Higgs) and showed the significant increase in the final signal significance.

Fig. 2 shows the cumulative average of the jet images for the signal (top panel) and the  $t\bar{t}$  background (bottom panel). The origin of the  $(\phi, \eta)$  plane is taken to be the center of the *b* quark pair and the density indicates the total  $p_T$  in each pixel. Images from the left to the right are obtained from charged hadrons (1st column), neutral hadrons (2nd), and photons (3rd). In Ref. [34], we used the convolutional neural networks (CNN) with the first three images (charged hadrons, neutral hadrons, photons) along with kinematic variables. These two recent studies show that one can enhance the signal sensitivity significantly via interplay of kinematics and machine learning algorithm. We regard the  $hh \rightarrow b\bar{b}WW^*$  channel as important as other channels such as  $bb\gamma\gamma$ , bbbb and  $bb\tau\tau$ .

# 3. Playing with neural networks

The first improvement that we are targeting is the use of momenta of leptons and the reconstructed neutrino momenta. Lepton momenta enter in kinematic variables such as  $m_{\ell\ell}$ ,  $\Delta R_{\ell\ell}$  etc.



**Figure 4:** The significance to observe the double Higgs production at the 14 TeV LHC. The acronyms *C*, *N*,  $\gamma$ ,  $\ell$ ,  $v_H$ ,  $v_T$  denote charged, neutral, photon, lepton, neutrino (Higgsness), and neutrino (Topness) images respectively. The acronym *Kin. Var.* stands for sixteen kinematic variables,  $p_{T\ell_1}$ ,  $p_{T\ell_2}$ ,  $P_T$ ,  $m_{\ell\ell}$ ,  $m_{bb}$ ,  $\Delta R_{\ell\ell}$ ,  $\Delta R_{bb}$ ,  $p_{Tbb}$ ,  $p_{T\ell\ell}$ ,  $min[\Delta R_{b\ell}]$ , Topness, Higgsness,  $M_{T2}^{(\ell)}$ ,  $M_{T2}^{(\ell)}$ ,  $\hat{s}_{min}^{(\ell)}$  and  $\hat{s}_{min}^{(b\ell\ell\ell)}$ .

However, since jet images are used (for color flow), it would make sense to study images of leptons and neutrinos. Correlation among the *b*-tagged jet, leptons and neutrinos will be learned naturally via images in neural networks. Fig. 3 show the cumulative average of the lepton images (1st column) and neutrino images (2nd and 3rd) for the signal (top) and the  $t\bar{t}$  background (bottom) before the baseline cuts. Two neutrino images are obtained using Higgsness (2nd) and Topness (3rd). Although they are only approximate, they do exhibit noticeable difference. As expected, neutrino images are supposed to the same as leptons images.

In Fig. 4. we show our final result on the signal significance considering the dominant background  $(t\bar{t})$  only. The green curve is obtained using CNN described in Ref. [18] with charged, neutral and photon images only. When adding an additional lepton image, we employ a deeper neural network based on ResNet [35] topology as shown in Fig. 5. The blue curve shows that the lepton image significantly improves the result, by capturing an orthogonal information in that the dilepton system of double Higgs production is back-to-back with respect to the  $b\bar{b}$ -system. The improvement from the neutrino images reconstructed from the Higgsness and Topness turns out to be mild as shown in the red curve. We find that there is a marginal improvement in a small signal efficiency region. Although the neutrino images of double Higgs production and  $t\bar{t}$  are manifestly different, the fact that they are highly correlated to lepton images, as shown in Fig. 3, reduces its effectiveness. When we combine the sixteen kinematic variables together with all images, the overall significance can be substantially improved as shown by solid black curve. The kinematic variables themselves (dashed black line), however, are outperformed by ResNet, indicating that the image-based neural network has a potential to improve a conventional analysis which utilizes



**Figure 5:** The charged, neutral, photon, lepton, neutrino (Higgsness) and neutrino (Topness) images are fed to a deeper neural network based on ResNet [35] topology.

high-level kinematic variables only.

In summary, we discussed a novel method incorporated in deep learning framework, which could bring a significant increase in the signal sensitivity for *hh* production in the dilepton channel compared to previous analyses [9, 10, 16]. The discussed method is quite general and can be easily applied to other processes such as the semi-leptonic final state, resonant *hh* production, non-resonant production with more than one Higgs boson, etc. It is straightforward to generalize the idea to different topologies in searches for other BSM particles as well.

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