Spectroscopy of ¹³Be through isobaric analog states in ¹³B

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Background: Spectroscopy of the exotic, neutron unbound beryllium isotope ¹³Be is still a puzzle despite significant experimental efforts.

Purpose: We aim to observe T = 5/2 states in ¹³B, establish spin-parities and spectroscopic factors, and use isospin symmetry to inform spectroscopy of ¹³Be.

Methods: Excitation functions for resonance elastic scattering of ¹²Be on protons were measured in the centerof-mass energy range from 1 to 5 MeV.

Results: Two T = 5/2 states in ¹³B at excitation energies 18.25 and 19.95 MeV were observed. Unambiguous $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$ spin-parity assignments were made, and spectroscopic factors were established using the Rmatrix analysis of the measured ${}^{12}\text{Be} + p$ excitation functions.

Conclusions: We provide the first direct and unambiguous spin-parity assignments and spectroscopic factor measurements for the resonances in the A = 13, T = 5/2 isobaric multiplet. This puts us on a solid footing to identify the 2.3 MeV state in ¹³Be as $5/2^+$ and infer the existence of an s-wave $(1/2^+)$ resonance at around 0.6 MeV with relatively small spectroscopic factor.

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Introduction. The evolution of nuclear shells with the increasing imbalance between protons and neutrons has been at the forefront of nuclear science for decades. One of the first cases which attracted attention to this phenomenon was a famous parity inversion in ¹¹Be. The ground state of ¹¹Be is $1/2^+$, and not $1/2^-$, as could be expected from simple shell model considerations assuming the "standard" sequence of nuclear shells. The well-established level structure of ¹¹Be below 3 MeV excitation [1] unambiguously indicates that the 2s1/2 and 1p1/2 shells are nearly degenerate in this isotope (within a few hundred keV). This degeneracy persists in the heavier beryllium isotope, ¹²Be. Based on the experimental results and theoretical models, the ground state of ¹²Be has mixed $s^2 + p^2$ configuration, in which the two valence

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neutrons occupy the 2s1/2 and 1p1/2 shells with nearly equal weights (see also the discussion in [2]). It naturally leads to the question of what happens with the addition of one more neutron. Which shell will be occupied first in ¹³Be, or more generally, what is the spin-parity of the ground state of ¹³Be, and what is the level structure of the low-lying excited states in ¹³Be? This is the focus of this Letter.

A variety of experimental approaches, summarized in Table I, were used to establish the level structure of this nucleus. Most recent experimental results rely on populating ¹³Be by a neutron or proton removal reaction at high energy, starting from ¹⁴Be or ¹⁴B, respectively. Yet, due to experimental challenges, the level structure of ¹³Be remains an open question. This isotope has four more neutrons than the only stable beryllium isotope (⁹Be), making it difficult to produce ¹³Be. It is neutron unbound so that all states in ¹³Be are broad resonances, and it is possible that four or more states are present in ¹³Be within the 2 MeV energy range above the neutron decay threshold. These facts lead to significant ambiguities in the analysis of the experimental data.

The results in Table I can be summarized as follows; the most well-established is a state at around 2 MeV above the neutron decay threshold, although its exact excitation energy is uncertain. The spin-parity of this state is believed to be

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Reference	<i>E</i> or <i>a</i> (MeV or fm)	Г (keV)	J^{π}
A.N Ostrowski <i>et al.</i> [12]	2.01 3.12	300 400	$(\frac{5}{2}^+)/(\frac{1}{2}^-)$
A.V. Belozyorov et al. [13]	0.80 2.02 2.90 4.94 5.89 7.8		$(\frac{1}{2})$
M. Thoennessen et al. [14]	< -10 fm		$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$
H. Simon <i>et al.</i> [15]	-3.2 fm		$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$
Y. Kondo <i>et al.</i> [16]	-3.4 fm 0.51 2.39	450 2400	$(\frac{1}{2}^{+}) \\ (\frac{1}{2}^{-}) \\ (\frac{5}{2}^{+})$
Y. Aksyutina <i>et al.</i> [17]	0.81 0.46/0.44 2.07/1.95 2.98/3.02	2.1 0.11/0.39	-
G. Randisi et al. [18]	0.40 0.85 2.35	800 300 1500	$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$
B.R. Marks et al. [19]	0.40 1.05 2.56	800 500 2560	$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$
G. Ribeiro et al. [20]	0.86 2.11	1.70	$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$
A. Corsi <i>et al.</i> [21]	0.48 2.3 5.1 5.7		$(\frac{1}{2}^+)$ $(\frac{1}{2}^-)$ $(\frac{5}{2}^+)$

TABLE I. Summary of resonances in ¹³Be suggested in previous experiments.

 $5/2^+$, but no direct spin-parity assignment was made. Most recent studies seem to agree that the lowest state is an *s*-wave close to the threshold, with some casting it as a virtual state and others treating it as a resonance. The existence and properties of any states between these two is up for debate. Some experiments suggest a $1/2^-$ state near the ground state, while others suggest there could be another $5/2^+$ state, and some suggest no additional states. A recent study of 13 F [3], the mirror of 13 Be, claimed observation of an excited state at 7.06 MeV, which they believe to be the $5/2^+$ excited state, the mirror of the $5/2^+$ in 13 Be at around 2 MeV. They were unable to resolve the elusive ground state from the background, however.

There is also significant uncertainty on the theoretical side. Some of the earliest no-core shell model calculations [4] identified the ground state of ¹³Be to be a $1/2^-$ state at 1.16 MeV above the neutron separation energy, followed by a $5/2^+$, $5/2^-$, and $1/2^+$ level sequence. There were attempts to understand the structure of ¹³Be using more phenomenological

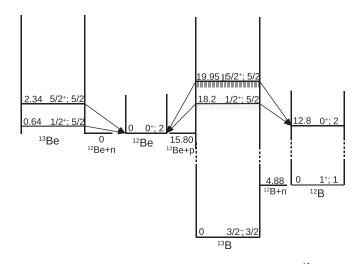


FIG. 1. A partial level structure and decay channels of ¹³Be and ¹³B. [10,11]

approach, such as the ¹²Be +*n* cluster model [5–8], tuning the ¹²Be +*n* interaction to the known properties of ¹⁴Be. But these models did not result in a definitive conclusion. The ground state in these calculations was found to be $1/2^+$ in Refs. [5,7] and $1/2^-$ in Refs. [6,8]. The application of antisymmetrized molecular dynamics resulted in a low energy $1/2^-$ ground state below a $5/2^+$ excited state [9].

In this Letter, we adopted a different approach to the spectroscopy of ¹³Be. Instead of populating states in ¹³Be directly, we study the T = 5/2 isobaric analog states in ¹³B and then use isospin symmetry to establish the ¹³Be level structure. The advantage to this approach is twofold. First, all T = 5/2 states in ¹³B are above the proton decay threshold and can be conveniently populated in ${}^{12}\text{Be} + p$ resonance elastic scattering, a reaction which has a relatively high cross section (≈ 100 mb/sr) and is described by well-understood reaction theory. Second, the Coulomb interaction in the ${}^{12}Be + p$ partition makes it easier to identify the low-lying s-wave resonance due to the characteristic interference of the s wave with the Coulomb amplitude. The resonance scattering data can be analyzed using the *R*-matrix approach, allowing unambiguous spin-parity assignments and measurement of the reduced widths (directly related to the spectroscopic factors). Finally, applying a novel active target experimental technique allowed us to accumulate sufficient statistics despite the low intensity of exotic ¹²Be beam between 400 and 1000 pps (it varied during the run).

Experiment. The excitation function for ${}^{12}\text{Be} + p$ resonance elastic scattering was measured at TRIUMF (British Columbia, Canada) using the ISAC-II facility [22]. ${}^{12}\text{Be}$ ions were produced from a tantalum target and accelerated through the ion transport system to the SC-linac. The SC-linac accelerated the ${}^{12}\text{Be}$ ions to 6 MeV/u. This energy allowed the measurement of the excitation function in the center-of-mass (c.m.) frame starting from 5.5 MeV down to about 1 MeV. This corresponds to the excitation energy region in ${}^{13}\text{B}$ where low-lying T = 5/2 isobaric analog states are expected (see Fig. 1).

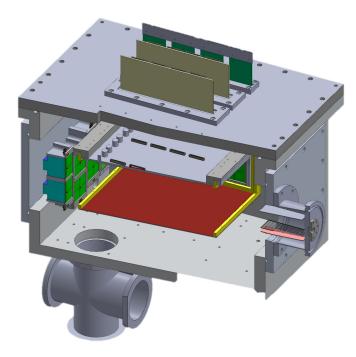


FIG. 2. A cutaway view of TexAT showing the Micromegas plate, Si/CsI detector wall at the back, and ionization chamber.

Measurements were performed using the Texas Active Target (TexAT) detector, shown in Fig. 2 [23]. As a time projection chamber (TPC), TexAT uses a highly segmented micromesh gaseous structure (Micromegas) detector to record tracks of charged particles. For additional gas gain, a gas electron multiplier (GEM) is placed before the Micromegas mesh. Tracks of the beam particle and the heavy and light recoil particles are recorded by the TPC. As an active target TPC, TexAT uses the same gas as a target and an active medium of the detector. In TexAT, an array of silicon detectors are placed at the forward wall of the chamber backed by CsI crystal scintillators to measure the energy of the light recoil particles. The particle tracks in the detector are used to reconstruct the reaction kinematics in conjunction with the total energy measurements in the silicon and CsI detectors. The signal from the GEM detector was used to count beam ions.

The TexAT was filled with 260 Torr of isobutane gas. At this pressure, the ¹²Be beam ions stop before the last 1/8 of the active region of the TPC. The TexAT Micromegas were divided into two gain regions: a low gain region for the beam and heavy recoil and a high gain region sensitive to protons by applying a different bias to the Micromegas pads. The low gain region was the first 7/8 of the highly segmented central region. The high gain region consisted of the side regions and the last 1/8 of the segmented central region. General Electronics for TPCs (GET) [24], combined with the GANIL data acquisition system (DAQ) [25] were used for the readout. More details on the TexAT active target detector can be found in [23].

The triggers were produced by any charged particle hitting the silicon detectors and depositing energy above the threshold set in GET electronics (generally around 1 MeV). Since

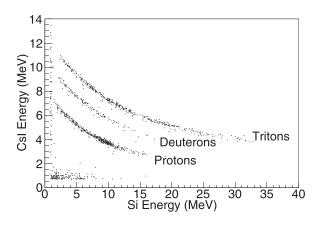


FIG. 3. The energy deposited in the Si detectors vs the CsI detectors for the 620-µm-thick Si detectors. Protons, deuterons, and tritons can be clearly seen, as labeled.

¹²Be ions are stopped in the gas volume about 10 cm before the forward silicon detector wall, the majority of recorded events were due to electrons from β decay of ¹²Be hitting the Si detectors, with the total event rate of about 50 Hz. However, such events are easy to identify as they produce no tracks in the TPC.

Analysis. The complete kinematics of the reactions measured in this experiment can be determined from the tracks in the TPC and the energies measured in the Si-CsI arrays. The ΔE -E curves for the events that punched through the Si detectors are plotted in Fig. 3, which shows a clear separation between protons, deuterons, and tritons. In the TPC, two pieces of information can be utilized with the Si-CsI array energy: the vertex position where the reaction occurred and the endpoint of the heavy recoil track (which always stops in the TPC). The energy vs endpoint plot (Fig. 4) shows bands for the reactions present. The dominant reactions

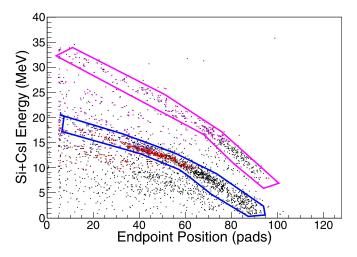


FIG. 4. Plot of the location in the TPC where the heavy recoil track ends vs the energy in the Si+CsI telescopes for the most central detectors. The red points are protons, the blue are deuterons, and the magenta are tritons as identified by the Si vs CsI plot. The blue and magenta graphical cuts correspond to the kinematics of the (p, p) elastic scattering and the ¹²Be(p, t) ¹⁰Be(g.s.) reaction, respectively.

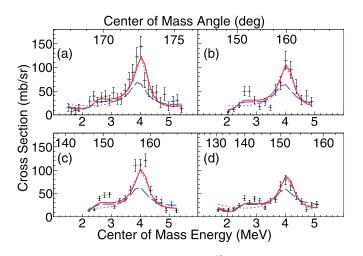


FIG. 5. The excitation function for ${}^{12}\text{Be} + p$ resonance elastic scattering. The solid red curve in an *R*-matrix fit with $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$ states. The *R*-matrix calculation with a $1/2^-$ state instead of a $1/2^+$ state is shown in magenta dots, and a $3/2^+$ excited state instead of $5/2^+$ is shown in blue dashes.

are the ¹²Be(p, p) ¹²Be $, {}^{12}$ Be(p, t) ¹⁰Be $, and {}^{12}$ Be(p, d) ¹¹Be reactions with lighter bands for (p, p') and (p, t) populating low-lying states in ¹²Be and ¹⁰Be respectively.

Using Figs. 3 and 4, the (p, p) elastic scattering, (p, d), and (p, t) reactions can be identified at energies above the proton punch-through in the Si detectors (≈ 8 MeV for most of the Si detectors used in this experiment). This is done by gating on the p/d/t "banana" in the Si-CsI ΔE -E 2D scatter plot (Fig. 3) and selecting the proper kinematic region in the total energy of the light recoil vs heavy recoil endpoint (Fig. 4) plots. In the energy region below the Si punch-through, the (p, p) and (p, d) reactions are more difficult to separate. This is because our gas gain in TPC was relatively low and did not allow for unambiguous discrimination of protons from deuterons using energy losses in the gas and also due to the fact that (p, p) and (p, d) reaction kinematics is too similar in the energy and angular range of interest for these measurements. As a result, in spite of having complete kinematics measurement, we had to subtract the (p, d) background in the energy range below 8 MeV (this corresponds to about 3 MeV in c.m. for the $p + {}^{12}\text{Be}$ excitation function). To do that, we extrapolated the measured yield of deuterons from the ${}^{12}\text{Be}(p, d)$ reaction within the proton graphical cut at higher energies to lower energies using a smooth phenomenological function that assumes nearly energy-independent cross section in the relevant energy range from 1.5 to 3 MeV in c.m. and describes the experimental deuteron yield from 3 to 5 MeV in c.m.

The ${}^{12}\text{Be}(p, p) {}^{12}\text{Be}(\text{g.s.})$ excitation functions are shown in Fig. 5. The experimental energy resolution of the $p + {}^{12}\text{Be}$ excitation functions is within the energy bin in Fig. 5 for all c.m. energies. The data were grouped based on the segmentation of the silicon detectors in TexAT. Six of the silicon detectors were used for the excitation function, grouped based on symmetry. The excitation function in Fig. 5(a) is for the central detector. The excitation function measured by the exposed bottom half of the detector above the central detector is

shown in Fig. 5(b). Figures 5(c) and 5(d) show the excitation functions measured in the inner and outer columns of the four detectors next to the central detector respectively. The angles are defined by the vertex position corresponding to the energy bin and the centroid of the detector regions.

Results and discussion. Elastic scattering of protons on ¹²Be can populate both the T = 3/2 and T = 5/2 resonances at excitation energies above the proton decay threshold (15.80 MeV). T = 3/2 resonances have many open decay channels, such as neutron emission to the T = 1 states in ¹²B, since the neutron decay threshold is only 4.88 MeV (see Fig. 1). Conversely, the T = 5/2 resonances have few isospin-conserving decays. Only proton decay to the ¹²Be(g.s.) is possible up to 17.61 MeV ¹³B excitation, at which energy the isospinconserving neutron decay to the $T = 2, 0^+$ state at 12.8 MeV in ${}^{12}B$ [the isobaric analog of the ${}^{12}Be(g.s.)$] opens. As a result, it is natural to expect that the T = 5/2 states with significant single-particle spectroscopic factors (if there are any) will dominate the $p + {}^{12}$ Be elastic scattering excitation function. The validity of this assumption was confirmed recently for a different nucleus, ⁹Be. It was demonstrated in Ref. [26] that the excitation function for the $p + {}^{8}Li$ resonance elastic scattering is dominated by the high-T (T = 3/2) states in the energy region where strong T = 3/2 states are present.

Two single-particle states can be expected in the spectrum of ¹³Be from simple shell model considerations. Assuming the closed p1/2 shell in ¹²Be (N = 8), the $5/2^+$ (1d5/2) and $1/2^+$ (2s1/2) states are naturally expected to be the lowest single-particle configurations in ¹³Be. Indeed, a shell model calculation using the FSU interaction [27] restricted to no cross-shell excitations ($0\hbar\omega$ space) produces two strong single-particle states, $1/2^+$ at 179 keV excitation (S = 0.91) and $5/2^+$ at 2.045 MeV (S = 0.69). However, it is clear that cross-shell excitations must be considered. The ground state $1/2^{-}$ comes from $1\hbar\omega$, and another $5/2^{+}$ of $2\hbar\omega$ configuration appears at a lower excitation energy of 1.782 MeV, which is clearly mixed with the $5/2^+$ mentioned previously. Similar mixing occurs in the ground state of ¹²Be, making the spectroscopic factors sensitive to configuration mixing. We will discuss this mixing later; nevertheless, a good starting point for the analysis of the measured ${}^{12}\text{Be} + p$ excitation function is to see if it can be reproduced with just two T = 5/2 states, the $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$, expected within simplified $0\hbar\omega$ model space.

The *R*-Matrix analysis performed with the code MINRMA-TRIX [28] indicates that a good fit can be achieved by including a $1/2^+$ resonance with c.m. energy E = 2.45(1) MeV and a $5/2^+$ resonance with c.m. energy E = 4.15(6) MeV (Fig. 5). This fit has four free parameters: the c.m. energies and the spectroscopic factors for the two states. Only two channels were used in the fit: the isospin-allowed proton and neutron decays. The reduced widths for each T = 5/2 state were calculated from

$$\gamma_{p+1^{2}\text{Be}(T=2)}^{2} = S\left(C_{\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2},22}^{\frac{5}{2}\frac{3}{2}}\right)^{2}\gamma_{\text{sp}}^{2} = \frac{1}{5}S\gamma_{\text{sp}}^{2}, \qquad (1)$$

$$\gamma_{n+1^2B(T=2)}^2 = S\left(C_{\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2},21}^{\frac{5}{2}\frac{3}{2}}\right)^2 \gamma_{sp}^2 = \frac{4}{5}S\gamma_{sp}^2, \tag{2}$$

where S is a spectroscopic factor and C² are squared isospin Clebsch-Gordan coefficients for the $p + {}^{12}Be$ and

TABLE II. Best fit *R*-matrix parameters for the T = 5/2 states in ¹³B with a channel radius of 4.2 fm and $\gamma_{sp}^2 = 2.55$ MeV. E_{ex} is the excitation energy in ¹³B, $E_{c.m.}$ is the center-of-mass energy, Γ is the total width, and *S* is the spectroscopic factor.

J^{π}	$E_{\rm ex}$	E _{c.m.}	Г	S
	(MeV)	(MeV)	(keV)	
$\frac{\frac{1}{2}}{\frac{5}{2}}^+$	18.25 ± 0.1	2.45 ± 0.1	660^{+400}_{-250}	$0.16\substack{+0.09 \\ -0.06}$
$\frac{5}{2}^{+}$	19.95 ± 0.06	$4.15~\pm~0.06$	600 ± 100	0.49 ± 0.08

 $n + {}^{12}\text{B}(T = 2)$ channels. All four excitation functions were fit with the same parameters simultaneously. The parameters for the observed T = 5/2 states are shown in Table II.

The experimental result is consistent with the observation of two T = 5/2 states with spin-parities $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$. There is no need for any additional T = 5/2 states or T = 3/2background. Using the isospin symmetry and the fact that the wave function of the T = 5/2 state in ¹³B is dominated by the $n + {}^{12}B(T = 2)$ configuration, we evaluate the c.m. energies of the respective $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$ states in ¹³Be by subtracting the threshold for neutron decay to the first T = 2 state in ${}^{12}B$ from the ${}^{13}B$ excitation energy. This results in $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$ resonances in ${}^{13}Be$ unbound with respect to the neutron decay by 0.6(1) and 2.34(6) MeV, respectively. The energy of the $5/2^+$ resonance is in nearly perfect agreement with Refs. [16,18,19]. The $1/2^+$ resonance energy is also in good agreement with Ref. [19].

The spectroscopic factor of the observed $T = 5/2 \ 1/2^+$ state is small (≈ 0.2). The reduction from S = 0.91 highlights the importance of mixing. Apart from mixing in ¹³Be, the s^2 and p^2 configurations are believed to be nearly degenerate in ¹²Be. It is also confirmed by the shell model analysis using FSU interaction. Therefore, it is essential to include all mixing and, in particular, the mixing of the $0\hbar\omega$ and $2\hbar\omega$ configurations in ¹²Be. Such mixing leads to very different shell model predictions for the ¹³Be states, which is shown in Table III. In this model, the $1/2^+$ spectroscopic factor is much reduced and agrees with the experimental value within the uncertainty. For the $5/2^+$ state, both the spectroscopic factor and the excitation energy with respect to the $1/2^+$ are reproduced (within 2σ).

The shell model calculations with the FSU interaction predict two negative parity states below the first $5/2^+$. The possibility of a negative parity ground state has been suggested in other theoretical studies [6,8] and experimentally

TABLE III. Level structure of ¹³Be predicted by the shell model with FSU Hamiltonian, which includes mixing of configurations in ¹²Be and ¹³Be.

J^{π}	E_{ex}	S
1/2+	0.00	0.23
1/2-	0.03	0.49
3/2-	0.97	0.68
5/2+	1.43	0.69
3/2-	1.90	0.12
5/2+	2.21	0.01

[14]. We now need to explore if negative parity states are consistent with the experimental data presented in this study.

Replacing the $1/2^+$ ground state with a $1/2^-$ ground state leads to a significant change in the shape and magnitude of the cross section at c.m. energies below 3 MeV, underestimating the experimental cross sections (see Fig. 5). Most importantly, without the $1/2^+$ resonance, there is no characteristic decrease of the cross section near 2 MeV that is caused by destructive interference between the Coulomb amplitude and the *s*-wave resonance. We conclude that the $1/2^+$ resonance is essential to reproduce the experimental data.

The peak at 4 MeV is described well by a $5/2^+$ resonance. The $3/2^+$ spin-parity assignment for this resonance is not consistent with the data because it leads to the significantly lower cross section near 4 MeV, as is shown by the blue dashed curve in Fig. 5.

We tried to add the $1/2^{-}$ and the $3/2^{-}$ states simultaneously and one by one, keeping the $1/2^{+}$ and the $5/2^{+}$ states in the fit. It turned out that the sensitivity of our experimental data to the negative parity states is low. Each of the tried configurations can describe the measured excitation function because the negative parity states make relatively small contributions. Properties of the positive parity states remain the same within the experimental uncertainties regardless of whether or not the negative parity states are present.

Conclusion. The structure of low-lying states in ¹³Be is a topic of great interest and much debate. Experimental and theoretical studies have thus far been unable to make definitive conclusions about the structure of this nucleus. This nucleus is unbound and likely has several broad overlapping resonances in the low-energy region, making it difficult to interpret the experimental results. We took advantage of the isospin symmetry to study the spectroscopy of the T = 5/2isobaric analogues in ¹³B, populating them using the $p + {}^{12}Be$ resonance scattering reaction. The R-matrix analysis of the excitation functions for the $p + {}^{12}Be$ resonance elastic scattering, measured by the active target detector TexAT in the c.m. energy range from 1 to 5 MeV, allowed us to unambiguously identify two T = 5/2 resonances at 18.25 and 19.95 MeV excitation energies in ¹³B and provide unique spinparity assignments, $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$, respectively. To explain the relatively small experimental spectroscopic factor of the $1/2^+$ state in the framework of the shell model, one needs to include strong s^2/p^2 configuration mixing for the ¹²Be states, providing another piece of evidence for the near-degeneracy of the *s* and *p* shells in this nucleus.

We cannot provide a definitive answer to the question of the spin-parity of the ¹³Be ground state. A good fit to the measured $p + {}^{12}Be$ excitation function can be achieved with only the $1/2^+$ and $5/2^+$ T = 5/2 states. No negative parity states are required. Yet, one can include the negative parity states $(1/2^-$ and $3/2^-)$ and still obtain a good fit, because the $1/2^+$ and the $5/2^+$ states define the main features of the excitation functions. An intriguing opportunity to resolve this problem would be to measure the neutron decay of the T = 5/2 states in ¹³B to the first T = 2 state in ¹²B at 12.8 MeV. If the ground state in the T = 5/2, A = 13 spectrum has negative parity, it would be a relatively narrow resonance (a few hundred keV) which should be clearly visible in the spectrum of neutrons from the ${}^{12}\text{Be}(p, n) {}^{12}\text{B}(0^+, T = 2)$ reaction.

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