

**Author:**

Ryan Miyashiro

**Title:**

What Makes Students Bleed Orange and Blue?: An In-depth Look at Block I

**About the Author:**

I'm Ryan, I grew up playing hockey and I enjoy doing anything athletic along with watching all kinds of sports. I think my passion for sports and learning about all aspects of it will help my role as an investigator. Even if it is not necessarily the sport itself but the different mindsets of athletes or the psychology that goes into being any type of athlete. As for my role as an ethnographer, I would wonder if I can do my project on a sport or some type of play or a specific part of that sport or play.

**Keywords:**

Block-I, "Illinois Renaissance" Project, Blockhead(s), Illini Pride

**Abstract:**

We wanted to take an in-depth look into the Block I student section at Illini football games. John focused on the history and past of the section, while my main focus was when Block I moved and its current activities. We wanted to find out everything that was behind this historic student section and why students continue to be so loyal to the orange and blue there.

**Initial Exercises:**

From the different readings and films we have viewed in class I have learned there is much more in sport and play than I originally thought. For instance, I did not know anything about cockfights or how much it is a part of certain cultures. Or how professional wrestling has impacted society and is a great deal more than just entertainment to numerous people. The huge controversy behind the chief here at U of I baffled me. I had no idea how he was so offensive to Native Americans and at the same time such an impactful part of this university. I hope I can take into account different things I learned from everything we have seen and read so far in class and incorporate it into my project.

For my project, I wanted to do something with hockey because I have been around it my whole life and have learned a lot about the game and actually playing would give me somewhat of an inside edge. But I did not know anything specific to do with that so I was thinking to maybe do something about an individual sport versus a team sport. The way an athlete conducts his or herself can be completely different if they are a single athlete or a part of a team in a sport. My other idea was to find out what actually defines a sport or why people think some "activities" or "hobbies" are not sports. For example, people would say NASCAR, cheerleading, or paintball

are not sports and I would like to research why that is and what technically makes something a sport.

Susan Brownell is considered an expert on sports in China. Not only has she studied and researched Chinese sport but she is also a national record holder in the heptathlon at the 1986 Chinese National College Games. She uses her first-hand experiences to focus on the cultural and social effects on sport in China. As an anthropologist that has also experienced her studies, she got an inside look at the Chinese lifestyle because she was an athlete on the Chinese track team herself. Although she received some criticism for doing her ethnographic studies while being a part of the team, she still observed and noted many things about the athletes and the other people of China. For instance, the different postures of students or other citizens in China or a woman's role in sports in their culture compared to other cultures. I liked the fact that she used her inside point of view to let others know about the cultural aspect of sport in China.

Ian Borden is an anthropologist that studied the effects of architecture and skateboarding. He realized skateboarding was more than just a hobby, but rather a certain way of life. Borden saw that the architecture of buildings or other surfaces were seen differently in a skateboarder's eye. A drained pool, a handrail, a park bench, or inclines or declines on a building are all things a skater can use to satisfy their need to take risks. The building of skate parks shows how all of this was put into a place used solely for skateboarding. Borden showed how a skateboarder can use what seems like anything attached to a building as a tool for this extreme sport.

**Question:**

The loyalty of U of I students to the Fighting Illini and/or the Chief at sporting events and throughout the university in general is very strong. I wish to discover what is behind this; what makes these college students become so supportive to the Fighting Illini? Specifically, at the football games in the Block I student section. What makes these students so supportive of the orange and blue? How is this section organized and what is the history and traditions of this historic student section?

**Plan:**

I plan to research the history and current activities of the Block I student cheering section at football games. It is a part of the Illini pride that is in the student body. Also, by currently being a member of the Block I at football games, I know what goes on in that student section behind the endzone and know what it means to have school spirit for the Orange and Blue. I plan to look into the "Blockheads", who are the leaders of the Block I section and find out what they have to do to prepare for every game. I also want to find out where all of the chants and different things the students do throughout the game came from and if there is any significant meaning to them from the university and tradition.

**Data:**

I looked up an article about the different motivational profiles of sports fans of different sports. It talks about why people become fans of a certain sport and the different aspects of that sport

that make them a fan. For example, the type of sport (aggressive, stylistic, nonstylistic), whether it is a team or individual sport, entertainment, and family motivation are only a few of the motivations that go into being a fan. There are also many psychological factors that affect one's willingness to be a fan of a certain sport. After all, without spectators there would be no one to watch the sport.

In the "Journal and Article locator" search section of the UIUC website, I looked up different articles from the Daily Illini that are related to the Block-I. Also, reading through the Illini Pride website I found information about the history and how the section is currently organized.

New U. Illinois Student Section Relocated for Fall (Daily Illini) (Scharman, Julian)

This article described the move of Block-I from the east side of the stadium near midfield to behind the north endzone. The \$116 million "Illinois Renaissance" project construction was finished before the 2007 season. The main motive for this move was noise, coming from the east side the noise was only directed at the west side and coming from the endzone the noise will be directed toward the entire stadium. Another motive was the heckling issue, the students may heckle other fans right by them; so by putting all of the students in their own area this will be prevented. President of Block-I (at the time) Kolbe Kasper thought the move would get a negative reaction from the students and said the heckling was a non-issue because that happens at all kinds of sporting events and is not a big problem at all. The students' general reaction initially was not a good one, they did not like the visibility of being behind the endzone compared to midfield and thought the student section actually had a smaller role with noise because when the defense is on the opposite end of the field they will not be heard as well.

Renaissance? I think not: students getting raw deal (Daily Illini) (Contorno, Steve)

This article described the negative reaction of students and why the move of Block-I was not good. The students felt as if they were being screwed over or even punished for unparalleled support of the football team through tough years, when the losses were adding up. They also felt the view of the field was very bad and there was a long and strong tradition in the seats on the east side of Memorial Stadium, Block-I controlled them since 1910. As Kasper stated, "Illini Pride and Block I officers are just as upset about losing our seats as everyone else... neither Illini Pride nor Block I officers were included in the decision of the student and block sections being moved." Though officials said the move will allow for more members, have more interaction with the band, and the noise will be heard throughout the stadium better.

Dollars over Scholars: Memorial Stadium, The Proverbial Shaft and Student Seating (Daily Illini) (Schmitt, Paul)

This article spoke of how it seemed the move of Block I seemed to only be done because the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics (DIA) wanted a profit. The DIA claimed there was no profit motive for the move, though tickets for Block I did go up after the move. Their new saying was "new team, new stadium, new traditions". Students felt that the memories and traditions of the Block I were being endangered because of the DIA's unspoken theme of "dollars over scholars".

### Move to North Endzone a Mixed Bag for Illini Football Fans (Daily Illini) (Johnson Daniel)

This article was about the positive aspects of moving Block I to the north endzone. Some people did realize the move would make the university much more money if the 40-yard line seats were sold to wealthy alumni rather than \$13/seat to students in Block I, which is exactly the reason students were so proud of the university for giving the students such privileged seats. The Block I officers generally had the same thoughts on the move; at first it did not seem like the best thing but any fears were erased after trying out the new seats, the "wall of orange feeds energy to the stadium." The move also created more room and expanded the Block I section and allowed for a student concession area exclusive to the north endzone. With the team doing better, the students were more lenient with the new section.

### Illini Football Block I Already Sold Out for Next Season (Daily Illini) (Montemurro, Megan)

This article is simply about the Block I tickets selling out for the 2008 football season. This following a 9-4 record and a trip to the Rose Bowl. They were sold out by June 5, 2008, the earliest tickets were sold out in school history. The new section allowed for 1800 members rather than the 1200 the 40-yard line section fit.

### Blockhead duties

- be present at all home games
- attend weekly card distribution meetings
- attend Illini Walk festivities prior to each home game
- help set up block equipment prior to football games
- attend any other Block I events during the season (team practices involving Block, special events, pep rallies, etc.)
- purchase own season football ticket in Block I

Block I tickets - currently \$112 (includes Block I shirt, tickets to all home games, Illini Pride shirt)

### Block I

- move allowed expanded membership, extended creativity, enhanced atmosphere
- uses over 8000 cards to create various images and words at halftime of the football games (ex: "Go Illini!", welcoming all Illinois fathers on Dad's Day, chugging contest, Gumby, "Got Juice?")

process starts Monday before a game, computer program designs card stunts, program spits out color combinations and organizes which seats use which cards at what time

-annual 100-member road trip to another Big Ten school to cheer on the Fighting Illini (went to Madison, Wisconsin in '06, saw Ohio State University upset in '07)

-positives to move: all students together, all fans in the whole stadium can see the Block I section

### **Discuss:**

We viewed a video in class, "In Whose Honor?" about the Chief here at U of I and how his apparel and dances are in fact not authentic and are offensive to Native Americans. This can relate to my project because all of this controversy did end the face of the Chief but his spirit lives on. It is shown through the students that have an undying passion for the orange and blue, specifically those that go to football games and sit in Block I. As they sing the Alma Mater or the fight song at every game, the Chief is remembered as the face of U of I that unites all that attend the university, rather than just an offensive mascot that means no good.

In the film, *Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism*, every tribe would come out chanting and dancing, each with their own original, in an attempt to intimidate their opponents. This reminded me of how Block I uses its own original chants and sings the the U of I fight song to intimidate the opposing team. Also, every tribe showed undying support to its cricket team and always demonstrated their "school spirit". Students in Block I also show unparalleled support to the orange and blue and will be behind their team no matter what.

### **EUI Links:**

How Can an Anti-Chief Fan Exist in a Pro-Chief World? (Ideals link)

This article discusses the student culture in sporting events, specifically how anti-Chief fans can exist in a pro-Chief environment; not only at the games themselves but at bars around campus and at other social gatherings. It argues how the anti-Chief fans are essentially excluded in U of I sports because the Chief has become such a distinct symbol for this University. I can link this particular article to my project because I am interested in looking into the diehard support of Illini students in the sports of U of I. Being a "diehard fan" almost depends on supporting the Chief, however by going to this University and wanting to support your school also can make you jump on the bandwagon of the Fighting Illini.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/2142/2312>

### **Reflect:**

I started off my research using the "ask a librarian" service on the UIUC undergraduate library website. This led me articles that have been in the Daily Illini on or relating to Block I. The differences in these articles allowed me to find out all of the different reactions from students and faculty to the moving of Block I. I also used the Illini Pride website to find some history and current activities of Block I and its leaders and organizers.

**Author:**

John Aguilar

**Title:**

What Makes Students Bleed Orange and Blue?: An In-depth Look at Block I

**About the Author:**

As a freshman at U of I, the start of school signified a new start in a new community. I was leaving behind my high school community and the things that I had grown accustomed to the past four years like bleeding black and gold, my former school colors, and rooting for the Hinsdale South Hornets. When I came down to Champaign-Urbana I was immediately overwhelmed by the smattering of orange all around campus and couldn't help but wonder, what's the appeal of orange? It's not like orange is an ordinary color one sees people wearing everyday walking in my hometown of Darien, but on the campus of U of I it's a different story. So I started wondering, what makes people bleed orange and blue on the U of I campus? It seems that I personally had just got accustomed to wearing black and gold and rooting for the Hornets, actually caring if we won a game or if we lost one. I was never a "Super Fan" at our home football games, but I understood where that school pride came from. Take note that I'm using 'we' and 'our' as opposed to 'their' or 'them,' this subtlety is significant because it's indicative that I felt included or accepted. So in evaluating the question what makes student bleed orange and blue, I'm considering the turning point might be when students start to feel accepted here on campus, and if so, how does Block I fulfill this acceptance?

**Keywords:**

School Spirit, Bleed Orange and Blue, Block I, History of Block I, Victory Block

**Abstract:**

Our study is composed of analyzing what specifically about U of I makes student's feel so animated about the university to the point where they bleed orange and blue. It focuses on school spirit especially shown through students who support our athletic teams primarily Block I and its history and subculture within the university. It explores the origins of Block I and how it got started to present day and the transformations that have occurred throughout the years.

**Initial Exercises:**

Something that we covered in class that I thought tied in really nicely to my topic was the video we recently watched titled "Whose Honor?" I thought that it showed the idea of having strong school spirit by depicting those fans who defended having Chief Illiniwek as U of I's mascot. It's this raw emotion that I want to figure out. What makes someone have such strong emotions to a school and its sports?

Another thing that I thought might be valuable to my research were the different examples of fieldwork and observations that we have looked at like Silk's immersion into the 1998 Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth Games because I believe these techniques may be useful especially in observing the way sports fans react at sporting events like football or basketball or how organizations like Illini Pride, which is known for Block I at football games and Orange Krush at basketball games, function.

Susan Brownwell was an American athlete who went to study Chinese at Beijing University during the fall of 1985. She had been a competitive athlete in the heptathlon in America and wanted to get involved in the Beijing University's track team. She also wanted to collect observations and data for her tentative dissertation on Chinese sports. She played the dual role of being an athlete and an ethnographer. She started her ethnographic process by joining the track team at the University and exploring its facilities. After garnering some attention from the media by being a foreigner and a good athlete she started getting acclimated to the Chinese culture, like learning the language. It's also evident that she had researched her topic of the individual athlete surrounded by a 'larger universe of ideals,' as Brownwell states. She quotes from other anthropologists like Mauss and Bourdieu using their ideas to support her own adding credibility to her work. She also uses her own observations to prove her point, like her comparison of the posture of the regular Chinese people when they walk to that of the students studying at the University. She analyzes how the difference in culture creates a difference in posture while walking, which is the basis of ethnography, showing how the culture or the environment affects play or as she refers to it, 'body culture.' Brownwell also discusses the role of sports in the American and Chinese societies, stating that the difference in cultures creates a difference in how they view sports. She examines the role of sports when the government and the society converge. She used the tool of fieldwork that paralleled the work of Geertz that allowed her to interview athletes and understand what she was observing a lot more. During the course of her work Brownwell questions the difference between an intellectual and an athlete. She also examines the role of women in sports in China since it's different to that of the one in America.

Iain Borden was an ethnographer who was interested in the relationship between architecture and skateboarding. He believed that skateboarding and architecture were interdependent. Meaning architecture is influenced by skateboarding or the 'urban realm' and vice versa. The ethnographic process he went through involved researching on the subject by reading books by Patrick Burgoyne and Jeremy Leslie, and by looking at magazines such as SkateBoarder and Sidewalk Surfer. He also actively searched for the history of skateboarding and how the practice was started. Borden examined just how the history and popularity of skateboarding led to terrains specially designed for this type of play, which made an impact on architectural history. He also saw how they both fed off each other. How the skateboarding led to certain types of architecture to be built, but in turn how certain types of new architecture like the modern skate park, changed the way skateboarding was done. Borden also examines how the skateboarders handle the physical aspect of their sport in space. He explores the process that the body has to do to orient itself before maneuvering a trick and while maneuvering a trick, all the while interacting with the architecture and terrain. The examination of different moves is shown through his detailed breakdown of moves such as the frontside rock 'n roll or an ollie. He questioned what architecture really meant, and believed there was a much more profound meaning to buildings

and how they're created. He believed they were something that was constantly changing and something not unlike 'a live thought' as he described it, especially in relation to the ever-changing modes of skateboarding. Borden examines what made skateboarding decrease in popularity and become more of an underground sport and the rebellion that became associated with the sport.

### **Question:**

I originally began with the question what makes students bleed orange and blue? I wanted to know what made students so spirited and love U of I. I started off my musings by exploring what it meant to bleed orange and blue and determined that it meant to be a diehard fan of the university and someone who had become so consumed by the university's atmosphere that they felt like they belonged. This included the idea that the campus ignited a certain passion and excitement in those certain individuals that bled orange and blue. So to narrow down my research I started to focus on what specifically about this campus created this enticing atmosphere. I first turned to the university's sports teams since most of the diehard fans of the university result from supporting the ever popular sports teams like football and basketball, but then I started to incorporate in my thinking about this research project specific things about this campus that would make it unique and lovable, like the Six Pack, or the Quad, or Green St., which are mentioned in some detail in the EUI Link to the Orange Statement. This topic was still too general, so I landed on the topic of exploring the sports fans, specifically those that comprised the Block I since it was them that first drew my attention to this topic of bleeding orange and blue because they are the ones bleeding orange and blue every weekend when the Illini Football team is playing. So I started to question the history and the background of Block I. How did it originate? How is it organized? What's its affiliation with Illini Pride? And so on. It's these questions that powered my research and produced the final product. What is Block I?

### **Plan:**

The plan that I originally started to do for my research was to search for articles through the library website on different student organizations that blatantly and consistently flaunted their school pride like Block I and Orange Krush, this produced many articles on the explanation of the programs and the different school traditions.

I also planned to attend the football games and basketball games through volunteer participation through certain school affiliated organizations such as Colleges Against Cancer and Habitat for Humanity. These opportunities provided a way to observe the school spirit from an unbiased viewpoint. This occurred for the Homecoming football game when I was able to volunteer for CAC and was able to have a neutral standpoint from my volunteer post to observe the sea of orange and the enthusiasm of the student section. I was also allowed to take pictures of the sea of orange and the cheering students from a good angle. This opportunity helped in immersing me into the subculture of the sports fan and the emotions that are tied along with it from a neutral standpoint.

My plan also includes on going to the Student Life and Culture Archives to see what I can find on the Block I and its history as well as researching more in-depth at the library or through the internet more about Block I and its influence.

After going to the Student Life and Culture Archives I found some interesting information to sort through. After asking one of the workers at the archives about the Block I six boxes of information were presented to contain information on the history of Block I. I then sat down with Box 1 and sifted through its information, which is detailed in the Research section. I next plan on sifting through Box 4 for more information on a relevant spin off of Block I, the Victory Block.

### **Data:**

Since my research is comprised of evaluating what makes students bleed orange and blue I reasoned what shows the strong emotion of school pride more than the football cheering section, more popularly known as Block I, and wanted to explore the history of it. When searching on EUI Library Resource link off the Moodle homepage I clicked on student life, which led me to the Student Life-General section. I didn't find anything about the history of the athletics or fan base in this section so I went back to the top of the page and found the section for athletics. There I found something that interested me. It was titled "Hail to the Orange and Blue!: 100 Years of Illinois Tradition" authored by Linda Young. When I clicked on the link it was unable to give me the text so I looked for the book in the local public library system and found where the book could be found.

Since I was unable to find something that I could immediately read, I returned to searching. This time I tried the University Library Site. I searched for Orange Krush, the basketball fan base equivalent of Block I, and this article popped up titled "Illinois Students Show Good Spirit with Charity Drive," which detailed the charity aspect of the Orange Krush organization. The article describes how the members of the organization find people to donate money ranging from \$1 - \$3 for every three pointer the U of I basketball team makes. In the end the number of three pointers made during the season is tallied up and a bill is sent to each pledge. The resulting money is then given to 19 different local community charities, and the organizations two founded scholarships. In doing this members of the Orange Krush are guaranteed floor seats to every home basketball game to cheer on their Fighting Illini and hopefully raise some money for charity. (Gluskin)

### Mascots in Court, Not on the Court (New York Times)

This article I found on the New York Times website through a database search summarizes the argument of keeping the chief: tradition versus political correctness. It describes the lawsuit that Dan Maloney and Logan Ponce, who were the current Chief and Chief assistant at the time of the Chief's removal, took out on the board of trustees and the NCAA. It relates to my topic of school spirit with the fact that these students, along with others quoted in the article, felt so passionately about keeping the Chief, it was like they bled orange and blue. And my primary basis for my research is what about U of I makes them feel so passionately about U of I's traditions? (Malozzi)

### Block I Tradition, Exemplifies Orange and Blue Spirit, Supports Team (Daily Illini)

This article describes some of the history of the notorious football fan base appropriately named Block I and its current success in selling out its tickets in record time by June 5th. It describes the relocation of the Block I from the 40 yard line to the North Endzone and the different card stunts performed and how it was formed in 1910. This information is important to my research since it helps give me a background on the popular fan base that students usually use to show their school spirit. (Montemurro)

### Get Ready to Bleed Orange and Blue (Daily Illini)

Describing the best of the bests on campus such as the best place to tailgate (Fourth and Kirby) and the best place to buy Illini gear (T.I.S. bookstore), this article proved to be informational on one subject related to the topic of school spirit, the best sports tradition, Paint the Hall Orange. This article described how students show their spirit by packing Assembly Hall and making orange the only color shown in the crowd. This tradition started in 2001 and has become a popular event for true Illini fans to show their spirit, which helps with my research since its one other way that I could use to investigate why these students are so spirited. (Grodsky)

### Orange Krush Raises Funds for Charities, Spirit at Assembly Hall (Daily Illini)

This article describes the history of the Orange Krush and its main purpose. It details how the Orange Krush got started and what has become of it recently. Orange Krush started before the '75-'76 basketball season under Lou Henson who was a former basketball head coach and Hall of Famer. The Foundation was founded during the '97-'98 season and donates money to the surrounding community and charities. This is pertinent for my research since it helps scratch the surface of how this school spirit organization was formed. (Montemurro)

### Box 1 from 1980's (Courtesy of Student Life and Culture Archives 41/68/151)

#### Cape

Blue or orange plastic square sheet with a hole for the head. Covers only shoulders to torso right above the abdomen.

#### Application Form

Includes standard name, major, address, phone number, gender. Asks what position if preferred, capes, stunts, key punch, and also if there is anything about the organization that one could suggest in fixing and what they like about the organization.

#### Different Positions

Advisor (1): Head of Block I and its organization.

Chairperson (1): Coordinates all members of Block I committee, reports to advisor, conducts Business meetings the Sunday night before a home game, responsible for committee chair people, creates a system to replace lost Block I tickets, works to improve relations with Athletic Association, keeps Block I Cabinet clean.

Administrative Assistant (1): Coordinates West Block during game and all distribution committees, acts in lieu of chairperson, attends all meetings of Block I committee and reports weekly to chairperson, handles all financial matters

Public Relations/Publicity (1): Handles publicity and advertising to boost ticket sales, organizes displays in Union and outside, promotes awareness of the organization, recruits publicity committee

Historian (1): Researches and archives past of Block I, keeps a current file of past chairmen, maintains current records of all publicity

Photographer (1 per block): Photographs of Block at every game, works with stunt designer

Stunt Designer (4): Takes an inventory of all materials (markers and design sheets), works on new stunts, works with major chairman and band director in band stunts, stunts completed by the Sunday before a home game

Cards and Shakers (1 per block): Takes inventory of cards, sorts flash cards before game, organizes storage closet, cards sorted and passed out at the beginning of the second quarter

Capes (1 per block): Responsible for organizing capes, distributes them during the end of the 1st quarter and collects them after half time

Instructions (1 per block): Responsible for instruction cards detailing stunts, distributed at the game after cards are handed out, collected after half time

Attendance (1 per block): Organizes contracts, checks ticket number against ticket number list, stamps hands

# of Positions: East Block Only – 17, Total – 22

Contract

Goals of Block I: “to promote enthusiasm and good sportsmanship” through “high quality card stunts” and “serving as models of sportsmanlike behaviour in the stadium.”

Rules: 1. Expected to flash cards 2. Promote good sportsmanship 3. No objects thrown in Block besides confetti 4. No cards or capes thrown in Block 5. Can't abuse, damage, or destroy cards 6. No one can be “passed” through stands

Consequences: Season tickets can be taken away with no refund, immediate expulsion from game, there'll be a financial assessment of damages and have to pay costs for damage

Instructions

Details the specific times they have to meet, how to fill seats (have to sit between the white lines and fill in all spaces), describes sequence of events. First capes are distributed, but can only be

put on when instructed. Then the instruction cards are passed out. The instruction cards are to be fastened onto the back of the person's cape sitting in front of them. Flash cards then distributed. Five in total meaning 10 colors. Details how to hold the card at a 45 degree angle. They have to find substitutes in case they can't make it to the game.

Different Stunts: Regular- One color flashes

Flip- Two Colors are flashed

Call Number- Numerous colors are flashed depending on which numbers are called out 3-D- Sometimes instead of flipping there's a command for some to stand to create a 3-D effect

Ticker Tape- Flashing in rapid succession

Flutter- Moving the wrists backwards and forwards to create a fluttering movement

#### Fact Sheet

1910- Birth of Block I, 150 members, located on the East main stand of Illinois Field, used megaphones and orange and blue capes

1921-Sachem is in control of Block I

1924-Memorial Stadium finished, now 420 members, and moved to the East stands of the new stadium

1926-Orange and blue cards used in Block I

1937- R.O.T.C. takes control over Block I, changes colors to khaki and white 1939-1945- During WWII Block I is discontinued

1946-War Whoops Pep Club brings back Block I, keeps same concept but now 884 members

1947- Reorganized and the Illini Union Student Activities took control, modeled the card section of USC and now contained 1100 members

1954-West block added, became the only dual card section

1967- 2 fluorescent cards added to Block I

1969- Computer used for the first time in creating stunts

1972- Named best card section by the NCAA

1976-1977- Became only traveling card section after taking trips to Purdue and outshooting the Purdue equivalent Block P

A lot of work was involved in the organization of Block I, 2200 capes and 11,000 cards passed out in less than 6 minutes. Show starts 5 minutes before half time and last until 5 minutes after half time.

#### Victory Block

IUSA (Illini Union Student Association) tried starting the Victory Block, the basketball equivalent to Block I, in 1965, but encountered many problems. They wanted to show the score at half time, but the scores differed all the time therefore impossible to plan the stunt ahead of time. The plan was to use the B section of Assembly Hall but its split by a narrow aisle and therefore complicates stunts. Its also too small to conduct the necessary stunts and the group compromised mostly of freshman who had no idea what they were doing. There was also no loud speakers so the Victory Block would have had to read instructions versus hearing them. They hoped to have two blocks with approximately 286 students located opposite of each other in Assembly Hall.

Box 4 from 1960's-1970 (Courtesy of Student Life and Culture Archives 41/68/151)

Daily Illini-Letter to the Editor-written by Paul Richert 1970- Tickets cost \$14, Block I popularity decreases after Rose Bowl Game Season Letter is asking for more support and encourages people to join Block I.

Daily Illini-Letter to the Editor-written by Major Chairman of Block I (Tom Hoffman) Details that there is no West Block since Block I tickets usually sell out by the end of June, but by September 1, 1970 only 260 of the 1100 tickets were sold.

#### Chief Tradition

1926-1927-"Lec" Leutwiler was the original chief who performed the dance. After he graduated the chief finished until Webber Bochers continues the tradition in 1929. He raised money to go to a reserve and superintended the Sioux women who made the chief outfit which was first worn on November 8, 1930.

Victory Block (1965-1966) written by Penny Wheeler (Victory Block Advisor)

The Victory Block was tried once in 1964 but too many complications. Terry Witt was Major Chairman of the Victory Block. Some problems they had were: unusual arrangement in Assembly Hall, over head lighting, poor communication between chairman and Victory Block, no P.A. system. The Victory Block was usually held only at Saturday Games. Some ideas for improvements: no practices, the use of noisemakers to get the Block's attention for the stunts, create longer cards to make the letters more legible, use no more than two colors, sell tickets at the Ice Rink or Union to improve sales, create "special cheers", move the Block to Block A in Assembly Hall, use one Flash Card. Pros about Block A section of the Assembly Hall: better spirit and enthusiasm since its closer to the game. Students will wear capes to create an orange V in the Block. It'll take up opposite sides of Assembly Hall with approximately 286 students in each Block.

#### **Discuss:**

The original goals of Block I was detailed in a Contract found in Box 1 from the 1980's were "to promote enthusiasm and good sportsmanship" through "high quality card stunts" and to serve "as models of sportsmanlike behavior in the stadium" (Courtesy of Student Life and Culture Archives 41/68/151). All the members of the Block had to follow a set of rules laid out by this contract. Among these rules were the expectations to flash the cards during the stunts, to promote good sportsmanship, and various other regulations to ensure the safety of members within the block such as no objects are to be thrown in the Block besides confetti. Failure to comply with these rules resulted in a revocation of the delinquent's season tickets without refunds, immediate expulsion from the game, and to pay for the damages done.

The Block was internally structured and organized into a hierarchy. This was shown through a packet detailing the different positions and responsibilities of the Block I Committee. There was one advisor who was head of Block I and its organization and one chairperson who coordinated all the members of the Block committee, reported to advisor, conducted business meetings the Sunday night before a home game, was responsible for committee chair people, created a system

to replace lost Block I tickets, worked to improve relations with Athletic Association, and kept the Block I Cabinet clean. There was one Administrative Assistant who coordinated the West Block during games and all distribution committees, acted in lieu of the chairperson, attended all meetings of the Block I committee, reported weekly to the chairperson, and handled all financial matters. One person in charge of Public Relations and Publicity who handled publicity and advertising to boost ticket sales, organized displays in the Illini Union and outside it, promoted awareness of the organization, and recruited a publicity committee. One Historian who researched and archived the past of Block I, kept a current file of past chairmen, and maintained current records of all publicity. There was one Photographer per block who took photographs of the Block at every game and worked with the stunt designer, and four Stunt Designers who took inventory of all the materials such as markers and design sheets, worked on new stunts, worked with the major chairman and band director in organizing band stunts, and completed the stunts the Sunday before each home game. There was one person per block in charge of Cards and Shakers who took inventory of cards, sorted flash cards before game, organized the storage closet, and sorted and passed out cards at the beginning of the second quarter. One person per block was in charge of Capes who was responsible for organizing capes, distributing them during the end of the 1st quarter, and collecting them after half time. There was also one person per block responsible for Instructions which entailed handing out the instruction cards which detailed the stunts, distributing them at the game after there cards were handed out, and collecting the instructions after half time, and finally one person per block in charge of attendance who organized contracts, checked ticket numbers against the ticket number list, and stamped hands.

An instruction sheet was also found in Box 1 of the series 41/68/151 in the Student Life and Culture Archives, which detailed the correct way to hold the flash cards and the different stunts the Block could do. It also detailed the sequence of events that would happen during each home football game. First capes were to be distributed, but could only be put on when instructed. Then the instruction cards were passed out and were to be fastened onto the back of the person's cape sitting in front of them. Flash cards were then distributed. There were five flash cards in total creating the possibility of using 10 colors for the stunts. The instruction sheet also described how to hold the card at a 45o angle and how members of Block I had to find substitutes in case they couldn't make it to a game. There were also six different stunts described by the instruction sheet. There was the regular stunt which consisted of flashing one color, the flip stunt where two colors were flashed, the call number stunt, where numerous colors were flashed depending on which numbers were called out, the 3-D stunt, where there was a command for some members of the Block to stand to create a 3-D effect, the ticker tape stunt, where cards were flashed in rapid succession, and the flutter stunt, where the members' wrists were to move back and forward to create a fluttering movement.

The history of Block I is as follows according to information found in Box 1 in the series 41/68/151 in the Student Life and Culture Archives. Block I started in 1910 and consisted of 150 members sitting on the East Main Stands of Illinois Field. They originally used megaphones and orange and blue capes in support of the Fighting Illini. The capes were blue or orange plastic square sheets with a hole for the head. They covered the area between the shoulders to the torso right above the abdomen. In 1924, after Memorial Stadium was finished, Block I grew to contain 420 members and remained situated at the East side of the stands. Orange and Blue flash cards were first used in the Block in 1926, and in 1937 the R.O.T.C. took control over Block I and

changed the colors to khaki and white. During WWII, Block I was discontinued until 1946 when the War Whoops Pep club brought back Block I keeping the original idea, but expanded it to include 884 members. In 1947 the Illini Union Student Association took control of the Block and modeled the card section after the one at USC and expanded the Block to 1100 members. In 1954 the West Block was added which made Block I the only dual card section in the nation. Computers were first used to coordinate the stunts in 1969 and in 1972 the NCAA named it the best card section. From 1976-1977, Block I became the only traveling card section after taking trips to Purdue and outshowing the Purdue equivalent Block P. At this point there was no more information that I found on the Block until 2007 when the Block moved from the East side of Memorial stadium to the North End zone where it still exists today.

One of the more interesting subjects that I stumbled upon during my research was the Victory Block. The IUSA (Illini Union Student Association) tried starting the Victory Block, the basketball equivalent to Block I, in 1965, but encountered many problems. They wanted to show the score at half time, but the scores differed all the time therefore impossible to plan the stunt ahead of time. The plan was to use the B section of Assembly Hall but its split by a narrow aisle and therefore complicates stunts. It was also too small to conduct the necessary stunts and the group was compromised mostly of freshman who had no idea what they were doing. There was also no loud speakers so the Victory Block would have had to read instructions versus hearing them. They hoped to have two blocks with approximately 286 students located opposite of each other in Assembly Hall. The Victory Block could be the inspiration for the Orange Krush which was founded a decade later in 1975, but it's hard to say for sure without doing more research.

### **EUI Links:**

The Orange Statement (IDEALS)

This EUI Project describes life here at U of I and the things that make the campus unique. It superficially describes the Greek system and different social and community scenes like the bars and the buildings on the Quad. This relates directly to my topic since it explains some aspects of the U of I campus that are unique to this campus, but doesn't go as detailed as I wish to go with my project. I want to relate these unique campus qualities to the reasons that make students so school spirited and support their sports teams and attend school functions.(Corwin)

### **Reflect:**

My research on Block I has produced a lot of insightful information and things that I never imagined I would have found. I believe this topic was perfect for me to choose since it was an interesting topic and I felt like I could do the research with no bias since I was in sort of a liminal or transitional phase in my life where I didn't really feel the compelled to support a specific school's sports team. I really enjoyed this process and look forward to archiving my research since it seems like a perfect way to showcase the work that I've accomplished throughout the semester.

### **Recommendations:**

If I were to do more research I would start by trying to find more history on the Block and how it got started. I would then do research on the present day Block I by interviewing the masterminds behind the current Block I and compare the present organization to that of the past. I'd also like to understand its affiliation with Illini Pride more and the demographic of the members of Block I to see who makes up Block I so as to delve more into the question of what makes students bleed orange and blue? It'd also be interesting to research the origins of the Orange Krush and to see how that group got started.