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**Skye MacBroom Interviews Joe Lemke, Founder of The Chicago Thunder  
*Network Administrator & IT Manager For Glass America's Corporate Office***

Chicago, IL – The Chicago Thunder Football Club is a non-profit athletic organization established in 1991, and is a proud member of the Mid States Football League. Beside enjoying a competitive edge and years of success, the Chicago Thunder has set forth many goals for the team, namely good sportsmanship, teamwork, family values, volunteer work, and community services that include youth football camps and scholarship funds for students demonstrating academic excellence. The Chicago Thunder is a voluntary football team that pays to play their home games at Hanson Stadium in Chicago's northwest side.



**Team History:** In 2004, the Thunder won its 6<sup>th</sup> and final CFL title and capped off its 4<sup>th</sup> undefeated season with a 15-0 overall record and claimed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Midwest Regional Title by winning the Mid States Tournament. In 2005, the Thunder joined the Mid States Football League, finished the year undefeated yet again, and won the championship by beating out the Indiana Titans. In 2006, they finished their 6<sup>th</sup> undefeated season, won the 2<sup>nd</sup> Championship, and were invited to play for the Minor League AA National Championship. In January of 2007, the Thunder defeated the Central Ohio Lions 37-9 and claimed their first National Championship. Now the Chicago Thunder is looking to build upon their winning tradition by welcoming in some new talented players into their family of veteran players and dedicated coaches.

**Q:** Joe, how did the Chicago Thunder start?

**A:** Six of my friends and I were tired of “just” playing football, so in 1991 we founded the team. In 1996, we were recognized on a local level for being a “force” to be reckoned with, and then things started getting exciting. Today we have 60 players, a coaching staff of five, and a team manager who is like our little sister.

**Q:** What is a pay-to-play team, and how does it work?

**A:** The Chicago Thunder is a self-funded entity. Each player contributes so that we can rent the stadiums, fields, security, and pay the referee. Our fan base is incredible; they buy tickets to the games, and support our efforts – and ultimately our wins!

**Q:** Yet it seems that the Thunder spends a lot of time giving back. Tell me about your personal beliefs about charity work.

**A:** Sports keeps kids out of trouble. I grew up in the northwest side of Chicago, and we didn’t have the opportunity of sports as kids. Today I have five children of my own, and I think that it’s important to learn the social skills involved with sports. The Thunder supports various educational charities, football clinics, and funding of equipment for young players who may not be able to afford it. I want to help “the neighborhood kids.” We make the newbie’s on the team work at Bingo games so that we can raise funds for our various charities. (It’s a rookie rule, Joe laughs.)



**Q:** It seems that the Thunder not only encourages family values, yet also acts as family itself.

**A:** Skye, the whole team is really just like a family. We are all so lucky to have each other. We are all here because we put our hearts into it. We are carpenters, fire men, corporate guys, policemen, you name it. On the field, we are football players, but off the field, we are friends.

**Q:** You’ve received some interesting media attention these last few years...

**A:** Yes. In 2002, Fed-Ex asked the Thunder to film a training video for their employees. We ran a few horrible plays, were disorganized, and messed up the game. Then we ran a smooth play because we suddenly remembered to use teamwork. It was a great video and a lot of fun. Jeremy Piven (of Entourage

fame) used to be in a show called "Cupid." They asked us to do a scene for the show as a Chicago football team. Then, in 2005, Best Buy filmed us for their demo tape in their stores to show the quality of their high definition TV's. We filmed an 8 minute video with the kids we work with for the football camp, and then filmed one of our own live games. It was fun, and weird, to walk into a Best Buy store and see my face, and our team, on 30 booming HD TV's.

**Q:** Joe, on the field, you play Center and are the self-appointed captain of the team. Tell me a little more about your day job with Glass America.

**A:** I have been with Glass America since its inception in 1999. I work in the corporate office and can honestly say, I love my career. It is a great work environment. I have never woken up in the morning and said, and I don't want to go to work. Everyone pitches in to get the job done. Team work.

**Q:** Nice wrap-up, I was hoping for a great analogy between football and Glass America.

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### **About Glass America**

Founded in 1999 and headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, Glass America is one of the largest independently-owned automobile glass replacement and repair companies in the country. Glass America has 94 service centers conducting business under the names Glass America and Auto Glass Service which are conveniently located in the states of Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Glass America offers a complete line of auto glass repair and replacement services for all years, makes and models, foreign and domestic, commercial or passenger vehicles. In contrast to many of the glass companies in the country, Glass America only uses OEM (original equipment manufactured) windshields, meaning that it is the proper windshield with the perfect fit, as specified by the original manufacturer for each vehicle.

As a leader in the Auto-Glass Replacement industry, Glass America upholds the highest levels of quality craftsmanship, and consistently maintains a proven track record for excellent customer service. All technicians are certified by Sika Adhesive Systems and LYNX Services. All auto glass installations and workmanship will meet or exceed the AGRSS Standards, and have a national lifetime warranty. Glass America's direct billing procedures and pricing structures meet or exceed the requirements of all insurance companies and glass networks. All of the company's national service areas offer both drive-in and

mobile services, and always strive to make business as quick and as convenient as possible for their patrons. For more information on Glass America, or to place an order, please call 1-800-634-5623 to connect to the nearest location. You may also visit [www.glassusa.com](http://www.glassusa.com) for more information.

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