They say it's because I didn't talk to the media enough. Every year there's a different argument. One year Mickey Henderson wins it over Cecil Fielder because Cecil played for a third-place team, I play for a first-place team, and the argument changes. The other problem I have is, since when is character supposed to be a requirement for the award?

IS: For about the last 50 years.
AB: Well, I never heard of character being important. So since I don't talk to the media, they get upset and cost me the award. Frankly, the media should have the vote taken away — players, coaches, and managers should vote. They're the ones who know the game. The media are biased. Players, coaches, and managers aren't.

I think it should be a panel of past and present players, managers, and coaches. They've been there; they've played the game. What do most media people know about the competitiveness of the game? Most never played past Little League. Most can't tell a slider from a change-up, yet they're up there criticizing players for striking out or making a mistake.

IS: Will losing the MVP award sway you to treat the media differently?
AB: No. I won't change. If I want to talk to you, I will. If I don't want to talk, I won't. Depends on my mood and the situation. If giving an interview is in the way of something I'm going to do that is going to help the Indians, I won't do it. Hey, I even had [teammate] Kenny Lofton mad at me for not doing an interview for his TV show, "Kenny's Kids." That's because he wanted to interview me the morning of a day game, and it was going to interfere with my preparation. He won't let me forget it, either.

IS: Considering the controversy surrounding the MVP award, how do you define a MVP?
AB: It's the player who has had the greatest impact on a team's success.

IS: So which player had the greatest impact in that regard?
AB: [Indians reliever] Jose Mesa did. He was by far the most dominant player in the league. Without him in '94, we finished a game out of first place [at the time of the strike]. With him last season, we won the division by 30 games and got to the World Series. To me, that's impact, that's making a difference.

Hell, I don't even think Mo Vaughn was the MVP on his own team. Tim Wakefield was the Red Sox's MVP. If he didn't start off 14-1, the Red Sox go down the tubes, and Mo Vaughn couldn't have saved them. The only thing is, Mesa and Wakefield are pitchers, and the MVP should go to an everyday position player. So when you look at Mo or me or Edgar Martinez, I think I had the greatest impact.

What pisses me off is that media people said I didn't do anything until the race was over, that I hit all my home runs in the second half, when the pitching isn't as good. That's wrong. Pitching gets better in the second half—and that's when pennant races heat up, when you've got to kick it into gear and raise your game to another level. No one can tell me we had the race wrapped by July. People said in September that the Angels had it wrapped up, and look what happened to them. I admit I had a terrible first half, but no one had a better second