We knew the Braves pitchers wouldn’t put the ball where the meat of our bat was. They would have gotten killed.

We knew they weren’t going to put the ball where the meat of our bat was. They would have gotten killed. If we play the Braves again in the World Series, we’ll have a great idea how to beat them—and we will.

IS: The Braves called the Indians arrogant and cocky. Did that bother you?

AB: I couldn’t care less what the Braves say or think, or anyone else for that matter. We’re a very loosey-goosey team, a very confident team. If people perceive us as cocky, fine. It works to our advantage. If teams are more worried about the way we present ourselves while we’re beating their brains out, fine.

IS: Does the prospect of being in the World Series again this year temper the pain of losing last year’s Series?

AB: There was no pain about losing the Series. Getting to the Series is the tough part; winning it is the next step. We had the best record in the major leagues in the season, and there was only one team better than us in the playoffs. We don’t have anything to be ashamed of, nothing to hang our heads about.

IS: Having signed McDowell and Franco, are the Indians unbeatable now?

AB: As close to unbeatable as you can get. McDowell’s a bulldog, a winner. When he’s out there, you know he’s going to be throwing everything he’s got. You’ve basically got to drag him off the mound to get him out of a game, because he wants to be out there.

IS: And Franco?

AB: When I played against him, I felt he was one of the great RBI men in baseball. I can’t believe the other teams gave up the opening to grab him. I mean, doesn’t anyone else need a great RBI man? The White Sox could certainly use a bat like Franco’s behind Frank Thomas. All we did was lead the league in runs, and then we go out and get another 100-RBI man? What are the fans thinking in other cities where they need another bat? We were the last team that needed a bat, and we got one of the best. The most intimidating lineup in baseball just got more intimidating.

I’d hate to be a pitcher having to face us.

You’re going to get your brains beaten in.

RICK WEINBERG enjoyed interviewing Albert Belle so much that he didn’t even mind having to travel from his home in Southern California to frigid Cleveland for the session.