The HERricanes, a 14 and under all star softball team that contains members from the North Harrison, Salem, Silver Creek, Corydon Central, and South Central high school districts, is headed to the July 26-August 2 USSSA World Series in Orlando, Florida.

Despite the impending trip south, head coach Troy Sanders is calmly watching the team practice with assistant coaches Tony Shutters, Travis McAfee, and Steve Wooldridge.

As Sanders described the assistant coaches, “They’re a huge help to me. They run practice, and allow me to coach.”
Sanders said he likes to sometimes just sit and observe his hard working girls in action during practices, in order to better size up the team’s strengths and weaknesses. The team practices once or twice a week at the youth league softball diamonds at North Harrison, which is the most centrally located location for the girls.

And the coaching staff doesn’t throw what Sanders termed “lollipops” as practice pitches, preferring to throw as hard as the players would encounter in a real game situation.

“We work really hard on the fundamentals,” said Sanders. “We’re very repetitious.” What they repeat is the five basic fundamentals of softball, running, fielding, hitting, catching, and throwing.
This is the third year of existence for the HERricanes, and they went from what Sanders called “the team that nobody knew” to “getting everybody’s best game”, and plenty of recognition. The teams that play the HERricanes pit their best pitcher against them, not their second or third pitcher. As of this writing, the team is ranked fourth of 96 teams in the state of Indiana among United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) teams. Their record after a tournament in New Albany the weekend of July 11-13 is 24-13, with the present record having started in April.

Sanders called the team’s chemistry “excellent,” saying “They get along really good. They spend the night with each other on weekends.”

The HERricanes are guaranteed five games in Florida, but Sanders notes that everyone wants to play a lot more than that. There are three sites in and around Orlando where the games will be played, and the best one by far is at Disney’s “Wide World of Sports” complex. Those are the best fields we’ve ever played on,” said Sanders. The Atlanta Braves conduct their spring training exercises there.

The biggest problem the HERricanes will have to deal with is the intense heat in summertime Florida. The heat was something they of course had to deal with last year.

One way the players will be able to cool off will be to swim in the pools that are present with the two houses that the team is renting for their living accommodations. The team also plans to have dinner out in a nice restaurant at least one time, and several players will be going to Walt Disney World as well. Another place they will try out is a strip amusement park where they will try tire swinging and bungee jumping.

A few of the players on the team expressed their thoughts on the season thus far, as well as the USSSA World Series this weekend.

Brittany Sanders, who was on the team last summer, will of course be going to her second USSSA World Series for softball. She is the daughter of head coach Troy Sanders.

With a number of new girls this year, Brittany Sanders was somewhat surprised that they returned to the event a second year in a row. Nevertheless, Sanders said she and her fellow teammates get along well, and between the practices and numerous fundraisers for the trip, “we put a lot of effort into it.”

Sanders said she thinks they will do well in Florida, if they “concentrate and play like we know how to play.”

One of the new players this season is Caitlin Atkins from the Silver Creek area. She played on the Silver Creek All Star Team in 2007 and the Silver CreekYouth Softball League in 2008.

So far, she said she feels like she is a part of the squad.

"It’s been great with these people, and I’m excited to go with the team.”

South Central’s Megan Sanders (no relation to either head coach Troy Sanders or his daughter Brittany Sanders, a player on the team) said the younger girls on the team qualified the HERricanes to the USSSA World Series in softball this year, since the older players from last year were involved in their freshman year of high school varsity softball play.

Megan Sanders said she wished that some of the fundraising had been started earlier, so they could have sold their fundraiser candles in the winter, which she thought would have helped sell more of them.

She sees the team chemistry as getting stronger all of the time, with time being to their advantage.

“At the beginning of the season, it was going slow,” she explained. “We got better at learning how together as the season went along.”