

ANITA NAMED ONE OF CRAIN'S 'WOMEN TO WATCH 2008'

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From this week's Focus

ANITA ALVAREZ

DEMOCRATIC NOMINEE • COOK COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

Yes, she's a self-declared "hockey mom" who's — yawn — struggling to balance family and career and has taken to wearing a lot of red power suits lately.

She's also a political novice who made history Feb. 5 by beating five men to become the first woman and Hispanic to win a primary for Cook County state's attorney.

Anita Alvarez, 48, a career prosecutor and marathon runner — her best finish is 4:12 — is still a relative unknown. But that will change if, as expected, she beats GOP nominee Tony Peraica in the general election in November.

The first person in her family to graduate from college, Ms. Alvarez attended the Chicago-Kent College of Law. She then joined the state's attorney's office to work on cases she felt made a difference: "I didn't want to work for a big law firm," she says.

In 21 years, she's supervised the public integrity, narcotics and special prosecutions units, where she handled the notorious Girl X case, winning a conviction against a sex offender who raped and beat a 9-year-old girl, then sprayed roach poison down her throat.

"She's been in the trenches," says Mike Johnson, a defense attorney who's faced Ms. Alvarez in court. "She's very realistic."

If she wins this fall, Ms. Alvarez, now No. 3 in the office, will have lots to do, like boosting prosecution of crooked cops. That, she says, will be enough of a challenge, even if she doesn't get to appear in court often.

Whatever happens, expect to keep seeing her in red. "I like red," she says. "It's my favorite color."

FIVE THINGS SHE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT: chocolate, running, family, friends, traveling

IF SHE COULD TAKE A CLASS ON ANYTHING, IT WOULD BE: ancient history or archaeology