

New Zealand's Southee 'unavailable' for World Cup opener

October 4, 2023

Online Desk: New Zealand's Tim Southee will miss the World Cup's opening match against holders England and potentially some of the following matches due to an injured thumb, stand-in-skipper Tom Latham said Wednesday. The Black Caps will be without regular captain Kane Williamson (knee injury) and Southee (thumb injury) at the tournament's opening match in the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Williamson played the team's first warm-up purely as a batsman and then fielded as well in the second warm-up, but Southee still awaits his first outing in India. "No Kane and no Tim as well," Latham told reporters ahead of the opener. "He (Southee) is unavailable for selection. He is recovering nicely, it has been nearly two weeks post-surgery, so fingers crossed he keeps recovering. "It's a bit of a day-by-day process. But fingers crossed he'll be available sooner rather than later as well."

Southee, who dislocated his thumb in a one-day against England more than three weeks ago, underwent surgery and said doctors had to "chuck in some screws and a plate" to boost his chances of playing in the 50-over showpiece event. Southee played a key role in his team's runners-up finish in the 2019 edition but missed the dramatic final defeat to hosts England at Lord's.

– 'We can beat anyone' –

The Kiwis are still hunting for their first World Cup title after making eight semi-final appearances in 12 editions. They come into the tournament as the underdogs, with most pundits handing the favourites tag to either India or England. "We are not focused on what people are predicting; from our point of view we are solely focused on what we have to do," said Latham. "If we can play our brand of cricket in these conditions — which is pretty different to the last two ODI World Cups, in Australia and England."

He added: "If we play to the best of our ability then we are hard to beat on the day." New Zealand come in fresh from a 2-0 win over hosts Bangladesh, but lost a four-match ODI series 3-1 to England last month. "I don't think it has any bearing on the next game," said Latham. "It's about turning up on that particular day and trying to play your best brand of cricket. If we play to the best of our ability then we can beat anyone in the world. Conditions are totally different to what we played in England." Latham said the team is "excited" to open the World Cup at the Narendra Modi Stadium, which has a capacity of 132,000.