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Kill costs courses millions
BY PETER BLAIS
The winter freeze cost Southern courses millions of dollars, forcing many to reseed greens and some to close for as long as two months.

The cold temperatures that struck in early December killed much of the Bermudagrass on courses from Texas to South Carolina. Unfortunately the problem went undetected until spring when the overseeded ryegrass began to die out and the Bermuda traditionally starts to grow. Only this time the Bermuda never greened up.

"It just stayed dirt brown once the rye died off," said Gilbert Medrano, head superintendent at First Colony's new public course in Houston.

The damage was so bad First Colony closed its doors May 29 and wasn't scheduled to re-open until July 25. It cost $25,000 to reseed all 18 greens. Assistant pro Scott Redblake pegged lost business at another $180,000.

Most courses were able to remain open, but had to resort to temporary greens. Nearby Sweetwater Country Club in Sugarland was "pretty severely" damaged but continued play on temporaries, then took them up, fumigated, contoured and re-sprigged. We planted June 22 and they look good. They are about 80 percent covered.

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S&L crisis hits golf
Let's make a deal goes nationwide...
BY PETER BLAIS
Golf courses nationwide are available at bargain-basement prices thanks to a savings and loan crisis that has left several courses in the hands of the Resolution Trust Corporation.

In the Phoenix, Ariz., area alone, two courses are for sale. Superstition Springs in Mesa and Happy Trails Resort in Surprise were the property of Western Savings, which was placed into receivership May 31, according to Western Savings Vice President of Real Estate Investment and Sales Paul Timm.

They are being marketed by the RTC, which was established to sell off closed savings and loan properties.

Superstition Springs is a 646-acre project undertaken by Western Savings and Loan Association in the early 1970s. The 18-hole Greg Nash-designed course has been smoked out of business as foreigners, pensions pick up slack
BY PETER BLAIS
Foreign investors and pension funds are replacing beleaguered savings and loans and commercial banks as major funding sources for existing courses and new course construction.

"With the S&L crisis, those institutions are basically out of the golf course business. A lot of money used to come from the S&Ls. Now they're history," said Stanton Abrams, president of Senior Tour Players Inc., a Boston-based company involved in golf course communities and representing many famous Senior players.

"Commercial banks have had a lot of problems with bad loans. So that money has basically dried up, too."

Foreign investment
Led by the Japanese, foreign investors are now filling a large part of the funding void.

"A worker at Sweetwater Country Club in Sugarland, Texas removes bermudagrass sod from a green damaged by this winter's record cold. The facility was among numerous Southern courses that suffered extensive winter kill requiring greens to be torn up and replanted. The extent of the damage wasn't known in many areas until the bermudagrass emerged from dormancy this spring.

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