Cristian Volpato licenses an AI twin

LEVEL B2


Photo: Glen Carrie / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What images of athletes do brands use most often?
2. Would you trust advice from an AI version of a sports star? Why?
3. How should athletes control their online image?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

license
to give official permission for someone to use your image, name or work

likeness
a picture or model that looks like a particular person

biometric
related to body data such as face, voice or movement patterns

monetise
to make money from something

clone
an exact copy of a person or thing

billboard
a very large outdoor sign used for advertising

regulation
an official rule made by a government or authority

exclusive
available to only one person or company, not shared with others

III. READING

Cristian Volpato, a 22-year-old Socceroo who plays for Italian Serie A club Sassuolo, has agreed a deal to license his AI image. A social media video shows him walking through an atrium before four digital clones appear in different places, including the Twelve Apostles.

One version smiles in a grey suit; another fills a giant digital billboard. In mid-September he signed with California-based Callandor, which received exclusive rights to his digital likeness, voice, biometric profiles and performance data.

The company will monetise his clone through brand deals and help restrict content that he does not approve. Co-founder Michael Fisk calls these creations "synthetic twins". Callandor, founded in February, also represents Brazilian footballer Jorginho and American sailor Chris Poole.

It is testing ideas such as foreign-language voiceovers and fan apps that simulate one-to-one advice. In June, Neymar licensed his AI likeness to a Chinese-owned platform for short World Cup videos. Governments across the world are considering basic regulation of AI image rights.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "'Synthetic twin': Why Socceroo Cristian...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which club does Cristian Volpato play for?
2. What rights did Callandor receive in the deal?
3. How does Callandor plan to monetise Volpato's clone?
4. Which other athletes work with Callandor?
5. Who licensed an AI likeness in June and for what purpose?

V. DISCUSSION

1. What benefits and risks do AI clones create for athletes?
2. Should athletes have exclusive control of their digital likeness? Why?
3. Would fan apps with AI advice be useful or misleading? Explain.
4. How strict should regulation of AI image rights be?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Mixed conditionals

Two mixes: 1) If + past perfect, result NOW: would + base. 2) If + past simple (now), PAST result: would have + past participle. Use now vs a past time to decide.

> *"If he had refused the deal, brands* **wouldn't use** *his twin now."*
>
> *"If rules were tougher today, some posts* **would have vanished**.*"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using "would".

1. If Callandor were newer, Volpato (not/sign) ___ in September. _____
2. If AI hadn't improved so fast, clones (not/exist) ___ today. _____
3. If I were a star, I (sell) ___ my image rights last year. _____
4. If rules had come in last year, athletes (feel) ___ safer now. _____
5. If clones were banned, Neymar (not/make) ___ his deal last June. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Glen Carrie / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach key terms from the list (license, likeness, biometric, monetise) using simple examples, and check students can find each word in the reading.
- Run a jigsaw reading: in pairs, students underline uses (ads, voiceovers, fan apps) and controls (exclusive rights, restricting content), then compare with another pair before whole-class feedback.
- Differentiation: stronger students add one extra real-world example of an athlete's AI use; others prepare a short summary of the pros and cons of Volpato's deal.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Board two columns (benefits/risks). After ideas slow, prompt money, time, brand safety, and fan trust.
2. Take a quick show of hands, then pair opponents to exchange reasons and one counterargument each.
3. Have students list one helpful and one risky feature, then compare in small groups for consensus.
4. Elicit concrete examples (consent, deepfakes). If debate stalls, propose two model rules to evaluate.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Role-play: In pairs, act as Callandor and Volpato's manager; negotiate a 60-second brand brief for his AI twin.

Writing: Write a 90-word announcement from Callandor explaining how it will monetise and protect the AI likeness.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Mixed conditionals

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


Photo: Glen Carrie / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which club does Cristian Volpato play for?
   Sassuolo, an Italian Serie A club.
2. What rights did Callandor receive in the deal?
   Exclusive rights to his digital likeness, voice, biometric profiles and performance data.
3. How does Callandor plan to monetise Volpato's clone?
   By landing brand deals.
4. Which other athletes work with Callandor?
   Brazilian footballer Jorginho and American sailor Chris Poole.
5. Who licensed an AI likeness in June and for what purpose?
   Neymar, for short World Cup videos on a Chinese-owned platform.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence using "would".

1. If Callandor were newer, Volpato ___ in September. **wouldn't have signed / would not have signed**
2. If AI hadn't improved so fast, clones ___ today. **wouldn't exist / would not exist**
3. If I were a star, I ___ my image rights last year. **would have sold**
4. If rules had come in last year, athletes ___ safer now. **would feel**
5. If clones were banned, Neymar ___ his deal last June. **wouldn't have made / would not have made**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Two mixes: 1) If + past perfect, result NOW: would + base. 2) If + past simple (now), PAST result: would have + past participle. Use now vs a past time to decide. (Examples constructed.)

> *"If he had refused the deal, brands* **wouldn't use** *his twin now."*
>
> *"If rules were tougher today, some posts* **would have vanished**.*"*